

THE NATURALISTIC TECHNIQUE
OF
EMILE ZOLA AND VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

by

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Preface

No man in the field of contemporary Spanish literature has come before the American public with greater prominence than Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. Our leading magazines have published reviews of his work and in many such articles, Blasco Ibáñez has been arbitrarily identified as the "Spanish Zola". This seemed to me one of those uncritical statements carelessly made and blindly repeated, which by dint of such repetition come to be accepted as true without anyone having taken the trouble to investigate their accuracy. In spite of certain similarities, there appeared fundamental differences which were equally evident. For that reason, I wished to make a more thorough study of the two men, to see in how far such an appellation was justified. For continuous help and cooperation in this work, I am deeply indebted to Professor Arthur L. Owen.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
I Comparison of the lives and temperaments of Zola and Blasco Ibáñez	8
II Treatment of comparable subjects	16
III Naturalistic method	46
IV Construction of novels	68
V Portrayal of character	71
VI Ethical considerations	84
Conclusion	97

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Introduction

The industrial awakening, the epoch-making discoveries of the latter part of the nineteenth century brought into play a new force which came to dominate all fields of human activity. This force, in general called science, was manifested by the desire to be free from the metaphysical, the romantic, the conventional and to seek the truth from observation of actual phenomena. In philosophy it was evident in the determinism, the scientific positivism of the time. Taine's Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise, published in 1863, was but a thesis to demonstrate that man is the inevitable result of three forces, "la race, le milieu et le moment". Rénan carried the same spirit into the historical field. L'Introduction à l'Etude de la médecine expérimentale by Claude Bernard revealed the changing conception of the medical science. What was more natural than that this same desire for truth should give rise in the fields of art and literature to the naturalistic school?

Before 1850 in France, the psychological novels of Stendhal, the social problems in the works of George Sand, and above all Balzac's Comédie Humaine indicated the trend toward realism. But the naturalistic school, so called, did not appear until after 1850 with Gustave Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers as leaders.

Into this literary atmosphere, permeated with the scientific, Emile Zola made his début. He did not choose a "literary career". Writing was for him a grim necessity, the only way of keeping the wolf from the door. He had nothing and from the end of his lycée course in 1859 until 1862 his life was truly bohemian -- without money and without debts. At that time he secured work on a periodical; in 1864 he published Les Contes à Ninon; and by 1868 his publications were six in number and his living practically assured. It was in that year that he conceived the idea of his great series of novels, Les Rougon-Macquart. The influences were many. Suffice it to say here that a certain tendency in his nature to "faire grand", admiration for La Comédie Humaine, in which many novels are connected by a single thread, and a desire to demonstrate his theory of the "scientific" novel, as well as the need of an insured income caused him to undertake this work.

For the foundation of his theory of the novel, Zola took Bernard's Introduction à la Médecine. To him the field of the novel was exactly comparable to the field of medicine. Experiments in medicine --- why not in the novel? For Zola believed in an exaggerated determinism. He thought that man's psychology and physiology could be dissected as easily as a frog in the zoological laboratory, thus revealing the exact cause of an action. This was his method of procedure:

"Comprendre chaque roman ainsi: poser d'abord un cas humain (physiologique); mettre en présence deux, trois puissances;

puis mener les personnages au dénouement par la logique de leur être particulier, une puissance absorbant l'autre ou les autres.

Avoir surtout la logique et la déduction. Il est indifférent que le fait générateur soit reconnu comme absolument vrai; ce fait sera surtout une hypothèse scientifique, empruntée aux traités médicaux. Mais lorsque ce fait sera posé, lorsque je l'aurai accepté comme un axiome, en déduire mathématiquement tout le volume, et être alors d'une absolue vérité." (1)

What Zola failed to realize was that in science man makes the combinations and nature produces the reaction, whereas in the novel, the author chooses the elements --- he also imagines the outcome. Zola tried to justify his characters logically on a physiological basis. In order to do this, he tended to simplify characters to the fundamental instincts, thus eliminating higher spirituality and intricate psychology. The result is "la bête humaine", a predominating type throughout his books. The two physical hungers determine the action, manifesting themselves in sexual promiscuity and greed.

The series of Les Rougon-Macquart consists of twenty volumes, being the "histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le second Empire". His purpose was to show by a hereditary neurosis "toutes les tares physiques et morales, tous

(1) Manuscrits autographes d'Emile Zola: 81, Notes diverses.

Quoted by Martineau, Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola, p.27.

les vices, même les rêves mystiques ou certaines vertus stoïques, comme étant de simples résultantes d'une cause initiale." (1) To this end he constructed a family tree consisting of two branches, one legitimate, one bastard, with the common ancestor a neurotic. In each of his twenty volumes he places a member of this family, influenced by his heredity, his environment and his own personal past.

Critics generally agree that Zola failed to work out this thesis of heredity. In the first place, the determining causes of character can not be absolutely ascertained. All the factors used by Zola have influence, but an unknown quantity continues to exist. Secondly, Zola was not a student of medicine, hence was not accurate in his scientific details. Furthermore he does not make the hereditary weakness convincing. For example, Etienne in Germinal has periods of uncontrollable temper which at times carries him away and gives him the desire to kill. But Etienne kills but one man, and him under the greatest provocation.

Critics are quite as ready to agree, however, that Zola painted life with unusual force and power. Henry James in Notes on Novelists expresses it well:

"To make his characters swarm, and to make the great central thing they swarm about "as large as life", portentously, heroically big; that was the task he set himself very nearly from the first, that was the secret he triumphantly mastered." (2)

(1) Paul Morillot, art. Zola, in Nouveau Larousse illustré.

(2) Henry James, Notes on Novelists, p. 43.

After completing Les Rougon-Macquart, Zola wrote Les Villes and Les Quatre Evangiles. In addition to his novels, he produced several critical works and even entered the field of the drama. But Zola was not a discerning critic. He admitted that he was a man of one idea, and that a critic must not be. Neither did he excel in the drama. It is as the author of L'Assommoir, Nana, Germinal, that the student of literature thinks of him today.

The profound scientific spirit which in England, France and Germany caused men to look for fundamental truths, was slow in penetrating into Spain. Politics was the all-absorbing interest. While Flaubert, Daudet, and Zola were dominating the French world of letters with their naturalism, only a mild form of realism existed in Spain. Fernán Caballero was an observer of life and chose her subjects from everyday happenings. But through it all is an excessive morality which makes dull reading. Valera attained psychological truth but for naturalism he had no use. His theory was that a good novel should idealize the sordid facts of existence. The end of art was the creation of beauty and the realist's purpose was absurd. Pereda pictured real human beings and in his novels we can see a true reflection of life; but it is the life of only one little corner of the world. He knew his mountaineers of Santander --- all their whims and idiosyncracies. He recognized the political problems and the social dangers surrounding them. But he made no attempt to broaden his outlook and get a world vision. Pérez Galdos, with all of his shrewd

observation, could not restrain a tendency to idealize and, more than that, to instruct.

Not until Emilia Pardo Bazán do we find the French type of naturalism introduced into Spanish literature. In 1883 she published La cuestión palpitante, a careful study of naturalism and of the evolution of the Spanish novel. She advocated no imitation. Her belief was that the representation of life was the object of naturalism and Spaniards, with a different temperament and environment could produce entirely original work even though accepting French doctrines. She could not agree to the enervating determinism of Zola, which she considered the greatest immorality of his novels. Neither did she accept his scientific theory. But her treatment is sympathetic and does not fail to recognize his true power -- something which his fellow country men often did.

Eleven years after the appearance of La cuestión palpitante, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez produced his first novel, Arroz y tartana. There was a book which described the life of Valencia with vividness and truth. It penetrated into the inner life of the socially pretentious and revealed the sham and corruption underneath. It abounded in common-place details and did not shrink from the unpleasant. The critics called it naturalistic. Someone recognized a resemblance to the author of L'Assommoir and labelled Blasco Ibáñez the "Spanish Zola". The comparison to one as much discussed as Zola immediately attracted attention. From all sides the name was echoed and

as such he has come to be known all over the world.

That the novels of the two have many traits in common is evident. To deny that Blasco was not influenced by an author whose name and works were so widely known would also be unjustified. But it is nevertheless the truth that there are many differences and that only a lack of discernment causes people to repeat the "Spanish Zola", considering Blasco the unquestioning disciple of the French novelist.

It is, therefore, my purpose, basing a comparative study upon representative novels of the two, to show that the relation of Blasco Ibáñez to Zola is not that of an imitator, but of a member of a common school of literature and that the points of difference outnumber the points of similarity.

Since all the works are not to be considered, this study must necessarily be suggestive rather than exhaustive. From Zola, I have selected those novels which the majority of critics regard as his best work -- L'Assommoir, Germinal, La Terre, and La Débâcle. Moreover the social problems involved in these find corresponding treatment in the novels of Blasco, thus affording a better basis for comparison.

Of the works of Blasco, I have chosen Arroz y tartana, Cañas y barro and La barraca from his first period when French influence, if present, might be expected to be most pronounced. Then La bodega, El Intruso and La horda are to be considered because of the problems and milieu represented. Upon these novels, therefore, I have based the following study.

Chapter I

According to Zola's definition, a work of art is "un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament".⁽¹⁾ If that is true, certainly we should know the man as well as his work. But temperament implies a mixture -- a combination of diverse qualities, resulting in the character by which an individual is known. Inherent traits, activities, experience -- all contribute to its formation. Are these elements similiar in Zola and Blasco?

For the facts in the life of Emile Zola we may rely upon the words of his friend, Paul Alexis, who gives the following summary:

"Né d'un Italien et d'une Française, -- grandi dans le midi de la France, au plein air, librement, gâté par sa mère qui lui laissait la bride sur le cou, -- puis, venu à Paris vers sa dix-huitième année et y connaissant brusquement la misère noire, -- forcé alors de travailler pour soutenir les siens, -- enfin arrivant au bout d'une longue lutte à la situation qu'il occupe aujourd'hui: telle est, en une phrase, toute l'histoire de cet homme." (2)

No mention of diversions or avocations. The whole bespeaks a perseverance in the face of hardship, a remarkable devotion to a literary ideal. For Zola was a specialist. At the beginning of his career he evolved the theory of the experimental novel and his life work was a demonstration and defense of it.)

(1) Paul Alexis, Emile Zola. Notes d'un ami, p. 154.

(2) Id., pp. 195 - 196

In striking contrast is the biography of the Spaniard.

His ancestors were rugged mountain folk of Aragon who came down to Valencia where life was easier. But fighting blood is in his veins, which has marked his whole course with inexhaustible vigor and vitality. As a child he was refractory, hating method or discipline and loving any form of sport. Zamacois tells us:

"Había en su temperamento un exceso de vigor, un reversionamiento ininterrumpido y descarrilado de actividad que le obligaba a vivir en rebeldía perpetua." (1)

At seventeen, he ran away to Madrid. There he won applause from the crowd by a fiery speech in a political meeting. Immediately afterward, he was arrested. Jubilantly he followed the officer, thinking of the great notoriety which would be his. Sad to say, the cause of his arrest was not his oratorical effort but his mother who had come to take him home. Later, however, he was not disappointed in this way. It is on record that he was imprisoned thirty times on account of his vigorous republican activities and beliefs, in addition to several forced periods of exile. For eight consecutive terms he was elected representative from Valencia. Without funds, he founded a newspaper, El Pueblo, which greatly increased his influence by giving expression to his political convictions.

Nor has Blasco Ibáñez contented himself with being politician, journalist, and novelist. He has travelled widely in Europe and the Americas. On one trip to Argentine he bought land, imported

(1) Zamacois, Mis Contemporáneos I: Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, p.10.

workmen from Spain and founded two cities. Commercial enterprises have also interested him. At the present time he is proprietor of a bakery in South America and a publishing house in Valencia.

If one's occupation is indicative of his character, certainly these men are unlike.

Correspondingly different is their philosophy. Neither Zola nor Blasco was blinded by the glamour of idealism. Both have come face to face with the sordidness, the ugliness of existence. But to Blasco, obstacles are a spur to action. We are here to fight and to triumph by sheer force of will. His own words, quoted by Zamacois, state clearly his creed:

"La gloria, como el dinero, como el amor -- declara --, son "adornos" de la vida, y nada más; arrequives brillantes que la embellecen y nos ofrecen bajo un disfraz amable. Pero el verdadero fin de la vida está, sencillamente, "en vivir". No debemos vivir para ser ricos, ni para ser célebres, ni para endiosar a una mujer, digan lo que quieran los falsos poetas: la vida goza de substantividad propia; se justifica a sí misma .."

(1)

Eminently materialistic is this philosophy and one which lends a pessimistic tone to his novels, where a protagonist such as Toni in Cañas y barro may struggle against unnumbered difficulties only to find the accomplishment, empty and unsatisfying. Contrasted with Zola's materialism, however, it appears more hopeful. For the Frenchman, with his belief that the determining factors of man's conduct are the animal instincts and the enviro-

(1) Zamacois, Blasco Ibáñez: pp. 22 - 23.

onment in which he is placed, leaves nothing to life but cold resignation to events fatalistically ordained. Spirituality which is the only door to true optimism, finds no place in either creed. But incessant action at least yields a temporary return for every day completed.

Blasco manifests the same attitude toward religion. He scorns not only hypocritical piety, but piety of any sort. Smug religiosity, satisfied with prayers and charity is repulsive to him, as he shows in El Intruso and La catedral. The need of today is prevention of social evil, rather than cure. Social settlement work, education, better living conditions, better government -- these should be the aim. Charity is but a mask to cover the sins of the giver and causes the recipient to sink more deeply into the mire of poverty.

Zola's creed was science. "Je crois que l'avenir de l'humanité est dans le progrès de la raison par la science. Je crois que la poursuite de la vérité par la science est l'idéal divin que l'homme doit se proposer. Je crois que tout est illusion et vanité, en dehors du trésor des vérités lentement acquises et qui ne se perdront jamais plus. Je crois que la somme de ces vérités, augmentées toujours, finira par donner à l'homme un pouvoir incalculable et la sérénité, sinon le bonheur ... oui, je crois au triomphe final de la vie. (1)

A glimmering hope for future humanity but little for the present generation!

Zola's sedentary life, predisposing him toward hypochondria, fortified him in the pessimism of his generation.

(1) Le Docteur Pascal, pp. 94-96. Quoted by Martineau,

Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola : p.242.

The consciousness of the futility of life, with no belief in immortality was conducive to an ever-present melancholy. To Zola, religion seemed to be the recourse of the desperate. Science alone was worthy of belief and effort. It is said that after his mother's death, the dread of an eternal separation brought him to hope for a future life. But his official creed was ever the negation of the spiritual. In spite of general gloominess of outlook, he was an incessant worker, never allowing his nervous disposition to interfere with his writing. Always meticulous, far-sighted, he organized his material with perfect clarity.

In fact, our best way of comprehending the fundamental dissimilarity in the temperaments of the two men under consideration is, perhaps, to see how they work. Zola's method was "geometric" according to Alphonse Daudet, for he went with mathematical precision from the general to the particular. In regard to the Rougon-Macquart, his first idea was a broad conception which gradually took form in the individual novels. His preliminary steps for each book were taken according to a definite system. First he selected a member of the Rougon-Macquart family, the milieu in which he was to be placed and the general philosophic conception involved. Then he would decide upon the secondary characters and the primary events from which he would try to deduce the logic of the action. Having this much determined, Zola sought from every available source data on the chosen environment. He often spent several months getting information before proceeding with the next step. This was to make a complete outline of the characters, allotting to each

the desired traits and defining them. For example in the plan of L'Assommoir, the sketch of Lantier consisted of a list of adjectives which become increasingly derogatory: "grossier, sensuel, brutal, égoïste, polisson." (1) Then with his characters well in mind, he concerned himself with the plot, dividing the material into a fixed number of chapters and even planning the number of pages to be given to this or that:

"Vingt pages de description de telle chose, -- douze pages de description de telle scène à diviser en trois parties." (2)

Having everything spaced, balanced and distributed, he then began to write, organizing the material within the chapter as he went along.

In his working schedule, the same love of method is evident. His days were almost invariable; he would rise at the same hour, breakfast in the same manner and write for a certain number of hours in the morning only.

"J'écris chaque jour un peu, trois pages d'impression, pas une ligne de plus, et le matin seulement. J'écris presque sans ratures, parce qu'il y a des mois que je rumine tout; et, dès que j'ai écrit, je mets les pages de côté et je ne les revois plus qu'imprimées. Je puis calculer infailliblement le jour où j'aurai fini." (3)

We might expect such cold blooded precision in a draftsman, but hardly in a novelist. Nothing of this sort is to be found in Zola's so-called disciple, Blasco Ibáñez. When Blasco has

(1) Paul Alexis, Emile Zola : p. 160.

(2) Martineau, Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola: p. 235.

(3) Paul Alexis, Id.: pp. 159-160.

chosen his main argument, he begins to write. Characters and scenes come intuitively into his mind and are swiftly recorded. With no apparent system he turns off books in a very short period of time, referring to neither notes nor outlines. When he has finished he sends it all to the publishers and revises only upon the proof sheets, where he prunes out about one third. Impression and intuition replace scrupulous fore-thought and method.

Whereas Zola worked but certain hours a day, Blasco worked at any or every hour. His first three books were written while he was head over heels in the political game. After strenuous days of speaking, committee meetings, newspaper editorials, he would settle down at two a.m. to write his novels. At one time he wrote for thirty hours continuously, stopping only to drink broth or coffee. Naturally the high pressure is sometimes evident in his productions, and the surprising thing is that it has left so slight a trace.

If we stop for a moment to compare Zola's whole novelistic production with that of Blasco Ibáñez up to the present time, we find a difference due largely to the literary ideals. Zola was a man of one idea. He had a theory to defend and to exemplify, and for this reason his novels bear an unusual similiarity to one another, if not for the fact that they are united in a series. Although the personality of Blasco Ibáñez is unmistakably evident in all of his works, there is a greater variety in type among his novels on account of an occasional change of purpose.

We have first the regional novels, vividly portraying

Valencian life. But the uniformity of these is broken by Entre naranjos which is almost purely erotic. Sonnica la cortesana shows a venture into the field of the historical novel. Then come the works which carry a heavy burden of propaganda, such as La bodega. Blasco has, moreover, made psychological studies of which La Maja Desnuda is an example.

This last class marks a wider divergence between the two men than any of the preceeding. Zola, whose philosophy was essentially physiological, could not write a psychological novel. Une Page d'Amour is an analysis of love showing both phases, but the physical predominates. His Rougon-Macquart series has been grouped as follows: Those which reproduce the throbbing life of a community, such as L'Assommoir; those which merely present a social picture, as for example, La Terre; and those which appeal to the moral vision, among which is Le Docteur Pascal. But his thesis is identical throughout.

Chapter II

Each school of literature has a preference for certain types of fundamental problems which are treated in a characteristic manner. The romanticists pictured in fanciful colors heroic adventures in unusual settings. It is entirely natural that the next movement should swing to the other extreme and choose nothing but the common-place, avoiding even actual events which smack of the sensational. Again and again the struggle for existence is a predominating theme. Here is the fight against capital, there against forces of nature or against human animosity. It is to be expected therefore, that many of the same problems have been treated by both Zola and Blasco Ibáñez.

One such subject is the condition of the peasantry. La Terre and La barraca portray rural districts, making visible the hardship, ignorance and moral turpitude of such communities. La Terre is a picture of La Beauce, a rich plain near Chartres. But La Beauce is more than a mere location. It has a personality which dominates the inhabitants, whose families have lived there so many generations that they seem a part of it:

"Cette Beauce plate, fertile, d'une culture aisée, mais demandant un effort continu, a fait le Beauceron froid et réfléchi, n'ayant d'autre passion que la terre." (1)

(1) La Terre, p. 35.

Little by little, through untold toil and privation, the peasants have at last succeeded in buying their fields from the rich landlords. But the lifelong struggle for a single thing has made that the ruling passion:

"Et ce désir séculaire, cette possession sans cesse reculée, expliquait son amour pour son champ, sa passion de la terre, du plus de terre possible, de la motte grasse, qu'on touche, qu'on pèse au creux de la main." (1)

The personality of the land is that of a cruel mistress. She drains the life from each of her servants, leaving him old, powerless and needy, then passes on to another. Repeatedly appears the idea of the indifference with which the age-old land watches the desperate efforts of men:

"La terre n'entre pas dans nos querelles d'insectes rageurs, elle ne s'occupe pas plus de nous que des fourmis, la grande travailleuse, éternellement à sa besogne....."

"Nous n'avons notre pain que par un duel terrible et de chaque jour. Et la terre seule demeure l'immortelle, la mère d'où nous sortons et où nous retournons, elle qu'on aime jusqu'au crime, qui refait continuellement de la vie pour son but ignoré, même avec nos abominations et nos misères." (2)

She is the source and the grave of all life!

In this atmosphere, the action takes place. For centuries the Fouan family has cultivated the land which they now own. By unusual thrift and sacrifice, père Fouan has added to his possessions. But the time has come when he is unable to care

(1) La Terre, p. 78.

(2) Id., p. 518.

for them properly and he feels that he should divide them among his three children: Hyacinthe --- called Jésus Christ for his sweetness and amiability when drunk; Buteau, a sheer brute; and Fannie, a true daughter of her grasping father. The story is concerned with the quarrels over the division, and the heartlessness of the children when finally their father is dependant upon them. Fannie gives him his due, but makes life intolerable for him by her exaggerated precision as a house keeper; Jésus Christ is agreeable enough but spends all his time and money getting drunk. Finally, Buteau and his wife, Lise, exasperated by the old man's tenacious hold on life and the little money he has left, smother him and then burn the body to cover the traces of their crime.

Another thread equally soiled by hatred and greed is that of Lise and her sister, Françoise. They are orphans, at first devoted to each other. But when Lise marries Buteau, they want Françoise to stay with them so that they may keep her property, and they treat her like a servant. Moreover, Buteau has a mad desire for Françoise who resists his brutal attacks in spite of a secret half-love for him which she scarcely realizes. To escape from all this, and to thwart the greed of her sister, she marries Jean Macquart. He has come from another part of France and to these people, rooted in La Beauce, he is and always will be an outsider. There is fidelity but little satisfaction in the union of Jean and Françoise. When finally Lise and Buteau assault Françoise in the hope of preventing the birth of a child which will forever destroy their claim to her land, and Lise

fatally wounds her, she conceals the truth from Jean. She even refuses to sign the will giving him their land, but lets it revert to those who have killed her. Family ties, burdened with hatred, hold against a stranger, even though he be a husband. The land, the treasure of her ancestors, --- why should it go to this outsider who had accidentally come into her life?

Many secondary characters distinctly described give an impression of acquaintance with the whole community. Avarice and the need of incessant toil have crushed the finer human emotions. Marriage means a business bargain; love, brutal desire; religion, craven fear of divine vengeance — or nothing at all; patriotism is something unknown. The book leaves a pessimistic feeling that men are grovelling under the hand of some imperturbable deity.

La barraca resembles Zola's novel in many ways. Here the chosen district is la huerta near Valencia. Its personality, quite as distinct, is brighter and happier, but just as indifferent to the misfortunes of mankind:

"La huerta seguía risueña y rumorosa, impregnada de luz y de susurros, aletargada bajo la cascada de oro del sol de la mañana." (1)

These peasants have not yet been able to buy the land, and the demands of the landlord burden them heavily. Ten years earlier, Don Salvador, "viejo avaro que nunca tenía bastante", (2) ruined tío Barret, whose family for generations had been tenants

(1) La barraca, p. 28.

(2) Id., p. 33.

of the richest fields of la huerta. Fate gave tío Barret four daughters and no sons, and alone the task of cultivation was too great. Rents were raises, misfortunes came, and Don Salvador turned him out. The poor man, mad with despair, killed Don Salvador. He spent the rest of his days in prison as a result; his wife died in a charity hospital and his daughters fell to the lowest depths of degradation in Valencia. This tragedy brought a curse upon the barraca. The neighbors stealthily disposed of any tenant who attempted to cultivate the old fields of the Barrets, and for ten years, it remained as a silent warning to all greedy landlords.

Now Batiste Borrull has brought his wife and five children to this deserted farmhouse. He is one with whom fate has been unkind. Whatever he has tried to do has failed in spite of his best endeavors. When Don Salvador's son offered him these rich fields in the huerta, with two years' freedom from rent if he will put the farm again into production, he accepts eagerly. A vision of a decent living and advantages for his children comes to him. Immediately he moves his meager possessions and begins to work with a will.

But to keep the barraca empty seems a sacred duty to the people of the huerta. A sense of sacrilege as well as a natural prejudice against strangers turns them against Batiste. They attempt to ruin his crops by shutting off the water in his irrigating ditches; they insult his family; and the children coming from school throw his youngest boy into the water. Chill

and fever set in, which result in the child's death. Each of their persecutors, now secretly ashamed, blames the unwonted cruelty upon his neighbor and goes to help the distressed family. For a while there is peace, but the death of the little one brings but a truce. Hostilities recommence more bitterly than before and end with the barraca in flames, leaving poor Batiste penniless to begin again the struggle against hunger and poverty in some other place:

"Huirían de allí para comenzar otra vida, sintiendo el hambre tras ellos, pisándoles los talones; dejarían a sus espaldas la ruina de su trabajo y el cuerpecillo de uno de los suyos, del pobre albaet, que se pudría en las entrañas de aquella tierra, como víctima inocente de la loca batalla." (1)

There are many points of similiarity between the two books. Both la huerta and la Beauce have been the source of life to many generations of the same families, until they seem to have acquired an individuality. This long devotion to the land has bred in tío Barret and père-Fouan a passion for their fields, stronger than any other feeling. Even their physical appearance is alike:

" Le père, jadis très robuste, âgé de soixante-dix ans aujourd'hui, s'était desséché et rapetissé dans un travail si dur, dans une passion de la terre si âpre, que son corps se courbait, comme pour retourner à cette terre, violemment désirée et possédée." (2)

(1) La barraca, p. 312.

(2) La Terre, p. 17.

"El pobre labrador, agobiado por una existencia de fiebre y locura laboriosa, quedábase en los huesos, encorvado como un octogenario, con los ojos hundidos." (1)

The thought of parting with his dearest possession is equally bitter to each:

"Et, dans ce désir de la possession, dans la joie qu'il éprouvait de mordre enfin à la terre, grandissaient l'amertume, la sourde rage de ne pas tout garder." (2)

"Barret pagó el aumento: la sangre daría él antes que abandonar las tierras que poco a poco absorbían su vida." (3)

The love of the land is to both a heritage from generations of ancestors who had worked their lives away on their little plot of ground. Compare the quotation (1) on page 17 with this from La barraca:

"Toda la sangre de sus abuelos estaba allí. Cinco ó seis generaciones de Barrets habían pasado la vida labrando la misma tierra, volviéndola al revés, medicinando sus entrañas con ardoroso estiércol, cuidando que no decreciera su jugo vital; acariciando y peinando con el azadón y la reja todos aquellos terrones, de los cuales no había uno que no estuviera regado con el sudor y la sangre de la familia." (4)

In La barraca, however, there is the question of land tenantry, not in La Terre. It is unfair that tío Barret should not be master of that which is morally his.

(1) La barraca, p. 36.

(2) La Terre, p. 37.

(3) La barraca, p. 35.

(4) Id., p. 29.

Other characters who are comparable are Jean and Batiste. Neither is a farmer by birth. Jean had been a carpenter, then a corporal in the army and had come to la Beauce to earn an honest living, free from the opprobrium of a bad family name. Batiste was first employed in a mill; later he became a teamster. But bad luck was always with him in spite of his efforts, and now he comes to la huerta with his hungry family to get a fresh start in life. Both, however, find the prejudice of the inhabitants an unsurpassable barrier.

Even smaller details are alike in the two books. One of these is the description of buying an animal in the market place. In Cloyes, Buteau buys a cow; in Valencia, Batiste a horse. Oddly enough the original price of the cow is forty pistoles, of the horse forty duros. (1) The actions described are remarkably parallel. They bargain and haggle; the buyers feign indifference, walk off as if to look for another animal and finally compromise on thirty pistoles for the cow, thirty duros for the horse.

Moreover, there are in both books descriptions of the procedure of a careless and unsanitary barber. The effect is rather less pleasant in La Terre for the fact that Lengaigne carries on this trade along with the tavern business, and there is every possibility of getting the two mixed. But in both, dirty towels and dull razors are in sufficient evidence:

"Un grand maigre eut l'idée de se faire raser, et Lengaigne, tout de suite, l'assit parmi les autres, lui gratta le

(1) Cf. La Terre, pp. 167 - 171 with La barraca, pp. 193-197.

cuir si rudement, qu'on entendait le rasoir sur la couenne, comme s'il avait échaudé un cochon." (1)

"Un par de sillones con asiento de esparto y brazos pulidos por el uso, un anafe en el que hervía el puchero de agua, los paños de dudoso color y unas navajas melladas que arañaban el duro cutis de los parroquianos con rascones que daban escalofríos, constituían toda la fortuna de aquellos establecimientos al aire libre." (2)

The second part of La Terre begins with this description:

"Il était quatre heures, le jour se levait à peine, un jour rose des premiers matins de mai. Sous le ciel palissant, les batiments de la Borderie sommeillaient encore, à demi sombres, trois longs batiments aux trois bords de la vaste cour carrée Et, sur la fosse à fumier, seul un grand coq jaune sonnait le reveil, de sa note éclatante de clairon. Un second coq répondit, puis un troisième. L'appel se répéta, s'éloigna de ferme en ferme, d'un bout à l'autre de la Beauce." (3)

The magnificent picture of dawn at the beginning of La barraca is longer and more vivid. We really feel the gradual transition from night to day. The passage quoted above is a small reproduction of a similiar scene. Compare these sentences selected from the first pages of La barraca:

"Desperezábase la inmensa vega bajo el resplandor azulado del amanecer, ancha faja de luz que asomaba por la parte del mar. Despertaba la huerta, y sus bostezos eran cada vez más

(1) La Terre, p. 222-3.

(2) La barraca, p.186.

(3) La Terre, p. 85.

ruidosos. Rodaba el canto de gallo de barraca en barraca." (1)

Although the accompanying circumstances are different, the dramatic effect of the close of the two books have points in common. Jean watches the destruction of Maître Hourdequin's property by flames which symbolize the people's revenge for an attempt to introduce new inventions. Love of the old and the traditional triumphs. Jean has been thwarted by the same invisible power and turns sadly away to try again.)

The malice of the people of la huerta has come from prejudice. La barraca belongs to the Barrets and no intruder may take that which is not his. They no longer reason why it is well for them to have the farmhouse empty. To keep the place unoccupied has become a tradition. And against this irrational public sentiment Batiste fights a losing battle. As in La Terre fire is a symbol of the people's victory.

Now comes the question, did Blasco plagiarize? The answer is, in view of the details mentioned above, a matter of opinion. But there are several phases yet to be considered. First of all, Blasco knew intimately Valencia and its vicinity. In Arroz y tartana he portrayed the bourgeoisie of the city; in Flor de mayo, the life of the fishermen, of whom there are so many around Valencia. That he should next choose to describe the huerta, upon which Valencia depends for food supplies, is in accordance with the general scheme and does not imply a search for a district comparable to La Beauce.

Once selected, there would, of course, be many similarities

(1) La barraca, pp. 1-2.

involved, for the French and Spanish peasant class is essentially the same. They have lived rooted to their little holdings for centuries and there is slight difference in their intelligence and instincts. Thus may we explain the characters of père Fouan and tío Barret; the prejudice of the community against an intruder and the pervading personality of the district, without recourse to imitation.

Furthermore, the likenesses are those of descriptions and attendant circumstances, rather than of plot. The plots and themes of the stories are absolutely different. It is not the greed for land and money which make the neighbors persecute Batiste and his family. They gain nothing by it. The idea that the desolation of the barraca is a protection to them has now become a prejudice which would be forgotten were it not for Pimentó, who stirs up hatred after the death of the little one had made peace. Perhaps the newcomers would always be treated as strangers, but at least they could live unmolested. The inhuman persecution does not arise from individual cruelty, but from the merciless mob spirit. There is no picture of such absolute barbarity as that of Buteau killing his own father, Lise her own sister. In fact within families there is love and devotion. Compare père Fouan's begrudging spirit with that of tío Barret who worked his life away to save his family from want, and even hid from them the knowledge of his poverty.

More striking is the difference in moral tone. Sexual depravity, continual description of the unmentionable and obscenity in language make La Terre almost unreadable. More

differences in method and technique will be discussed later, but this should at least be mentioned because of the importance of this dissimilarity between the naturalism of Zola and Blasco.

La Terre and La barraca present a parallel picture of peasant life; they both attempt to reproduce it accurately, which gives rise to comparable descriptions. But the plots, the construction and especially the naturalistic technique is different and the absence of gross detail in La barraca makes us hope that it is a truer picture of the huerta than La Terre is of la Beauce.

Incidentally in La Débâcle Zola shows us as unpleasing a picture of a French peasant as in La Terre. The main theme of the story is the Franco-Prussian war, in which the mismanagement and inefficiency of the officers cause disaster. The starving French soldiers can get no answer to their knocks at the door of père Fouchard. The place seems deserted, and they stumble on. But he receives the pursuing enemy, for they have money to pay for his supplies. The old miser does open rather grudgingly to his nephew and his son, whom he has not seen for years on account of a quarrel. On the evening of the next day, however, after the battle of Sedan, his primary concern is still his own affairs:

"Vers le soir, le père Fouchard, tourmenté également dans son mutisme voulu, ne pensant guère à son fils, mais anxieux de savoir comment le malheur des autres allait tourner pour lui était sur le pas de sa porte à voir venir les événements." (1)

(1) La Débâcle, p. 407.

To Zola, the typical peasant was evidently despicably greedy and perverted.

An entirely different phase of provincial life is introduced in La bodega, where Blasco emphasizes propaganda to the serious detriment of the book as a work of art. The thesis is the brutalizing effect of alcohol upon the lower classes. It is effectively presented by laying the scene in Jerez, where all toil and all industry is devoted directly or indirectly to the production of the famous wine. The rich land owners force the poor people to such enervating labor and keep them in such degradation that they themselves scarcely realize their condition and seek rather, to drown their sorrows in drink.

"La injusta distribución del bienestar: el aumento de la miseria así como aumenta la civilización: el aprovecharse los poderosos de todos los inventos de la mecánica, ideados para suprimir el trabajo corporal y que solo servían para hacerlo más pesado y embrutecedor; todos los males de la humanidad provenían de la apropiación de la tierra por unos cuantos miles de hombres que no siembran y sin embargo recogen, mientras millones de seres hacen abortar al suelo sus tesoros de vida, sufriendo un hambre de siglos y siglos. " (1)

As in La barraca comes the question why those who work the fields should have no share in the benefits resulting?

But since the essential problem is not that of the peasantry but rather of a lower class of laborers oppressed by capital, there are no similarities between La bodega and La Terre in

(1) La bodega, p. 151.

spite of the rural setting. Leaving this point, therefore, let us consider the manner in which Blasco develops the thesis against alcohol, in order to compare it with that of L'Assommoir.

In La bodega Blasco gets his ideas before us in three ways: description, action, and direct statement by Salvatierra, a social prophet. He describes the wretched lives of the toilers and the way in which their masters keep them contented with alcohol. Then he pictures the drunken orgies of the rich to show that the evil influences of drink are not limited to the poor people. But often his descriptions lose power because they are indirect -- some one in the story talks about the scene instead of letting the reader see it for himself.

All the tragedies of the rather subordinate plot are caused by the beautiful wine of Jerez: The Dupont family, of which Don Pablo is head own the richest estates in Jerez. Rafael, who is manager of Luis Dupont's lands, is betrothed to the daughter of Fermín Montenegro, who for years has been in the service of Don Pablo. Rafael and María de la Luz love each other sincerely, but in a drunken revel at the finca she is dishonored by Luis Dupont. A feeling of class superiority seems to absolve the Duponts from any responsibility for reparation. Enraged by their injustice, María's brother kills Luis and escapes to America. After some months of tragic despair, the lovers come together once more, resolved to forget the past, for which neither is to blame, and follow Fermín to America, which is for them a land of promise and of new life.

But this thread of story is so completely enmeshed in a mass of social and ethical ideas that it seems secondary. Through Salvatierra, Blasco finds opportunity to expound to us the deplorableness of the conditions more in the manner of a lecture than of a novel. We see the working people whose sole joy in life is wine:

"Adoraba el vino con el entusiasmo de la gente del campo que no conoce otro alimento que el pan de las teleras, el pan de los gazpachos ó el ajo caliente, y obligada a rociar con agua esta comida insípida, sin otra grasa que el hediondo aceite del condimento, sueña con el vino, viendo en él la energía de su existencia, la alegría de su pensamiento. Los pobres anhelaban con vehemencia de anémicos esta sangre de la tierra. El vaso de vino mitiga el hambre y alegra la vida un momento con su fuego: es un rayo de sol que pasa por el estómago." (1)

Their condition is made all the more irremediable because their torpid minds can not comprehend anything better:

"Qué podía hacer un pobre sino beber?" (2)

Those in power recognized fully the advantage which this inborn craving for drink afforded them, and make use of it to prevent an awakening:

"La bodega era la moderna fortaleza feudal que mantenía a las masas en la servidumbre y la abyección. Los entusiasmos, los crímenes, la alegría, los amores, todo era producto del vino, como si aquel pueblo, que aprendía a beber apenas soltaba el pecho de la madre y contaba las horas del día por el número de

(1) La bodega, p. 98.

(2) Id., p. 147.

copas careciese de pasiones y afectos, y fuera incapaz de verse y sentir por propio impulso, necesitando para todos sus actos el resorte de la bebida." (1)

Thus, more by direct expression, than by a presentation from which we draw our own conclusions, Blasco develops his thesis. It seems, in fact, that the tragedy of María de la Luz is conceived only to exemplify the main argument. In order to show that the evils of alcohol affect the upper as well as the lower classes, he introduces the degenerate cousin of Don Pablo, the Marqués, and Luis Dupont. The excess of propaganda, however, tends to detract from, instead of adding to the convincing effect.

Zola's L'Assommoir takes us away from the provinces to the heart of Paris and pictures the seething life of the substrata in that great city. The words of Benjamin Wells summarize it well:

"The whole is an apocalyptic epic of social putrefaction, starvation, delirium, in which all figures are typical of the fearful struggle of the submerged for a life that stifles ideals, inevitably involves its own disappointment and is not only of earth earthy, but of dirt dirty, a grandiose evocation of topsy turvy idealism." (2)

Zola knew Paris -- the squalor, hunger and tragedy of its life. For that reason he could give this book, with all of its coarseness and ugliness unusual power. The impression of it is burned into the mind of the reader.

(1) La bodega, p. 201.

(2) Benjamin W. Wells, Century of French Fiction, p. 295

Gervaise comes from Plassans to Paris with Lantier and their two children. She has no legal hold upon him and he soon deserts her, after pawning or selling all of their possessions. To be sure, Gervaise had lived with Lantier for six years, but she is not bad -- only weak. "On avait tort de lui croire une grosse volonté; elle était très faible au contraire; elle se laissait aller où on la poussait, par crainte de causer de la peine à quelqu'un." (1) Her ideal of life, her dream of perfect happiness is pitifully meager, and all the more so if we consider how difficult for one of her class to attain: --- "Travailler, manger du pain, avoir un trou à soi, élever ses enfants, mourir dans son lit .." (2)

She secures work in a laundry, supports her children honestly and resolutely refuses the invitations of Coupeau, a tinner who lives in the same hotel. Seeing no other way to satisfy his desires, he proposes marriage. Gervaise accepts, but with a presentiment of future misfortune. Père Coupeau had been a drunkard and had fallen off the roof where he was working as a consequence. This lesson warned the son, and as yet he has shunned the evil, but the inclination is there. However, for several years they live together happily and industriously. A girl, Nana, is born to them and they dream of a happy future. Gervaise is saving money to buy a laundry establishment of her own and soon she will have enough. But one day, when Coupeau is working on the roof of a high building, Nana attracts his attention. He looks, loses his footing and falls. Devotedly Gervaise

(1) L'Assommoir, p. 57.

(2) Id., p. 50.

nurses him back to health, spending all of her savings rather than let him go to a charity hospital. But the long period of idleness deadens his will to work. He begins to loaf and to drink, which gradually becomes a confirmed habit. She, still hoping to possess a shop, borrows enough money from her neighbor Goujet, who idealizes her for her devotion to Coupeau. At first her establishment succeeds, but little by little, her moral fiber weakens. She stops saving and spends all she makes for delicacies; her debts go unpaid; her work becomes careless; she yields once more to Lantier, who has returned; she loses her shop; Nana becomes a prostitute, Coupeau dies of delirium tremens and Gervaise, after a period of the most utter degradation is discovered dead in a vacant room in the lodging house. The gradual moral decay is masterfully done. Each step leads irresistably to the next.

A résumé does not give an adequate idea of the book, for there are typical characters, scenes, descriptions in every chapter, which bring the whole community before our eyes. The central figure is the dram shop, whose evil influence over this mass of people seems to reach the proportions of an animate rather than an inanimate object. This distillery in the shop of père Colombe is the head of an insidious beast which holds all humanity in its tentacles. We see it first when Gervaise lunches with Coupeau at père Colombe's:

"Mais la curiosité de la machine était, au fond, de l'autre côté d'une barrière de chêne, dans une cour vitrée, l'appareil à distiller que les consommateurs voyaient fonctionner, des alambics aux longs cols, des serpentins descendant sous terre,

une cuisine du diable devant laquelle venait rêver les ouvriers souïards." (1)

The machine with its drop of liquor oozing out slowly but incessantly, later hypnotizes Gervaise. It seems to typify that degenerative force which is ruining her life and the lives of those around her:

"Et elle jetait des regards obliques sur la machine à souïler, derrière elle. Cette sacrée marmite, ronde comme un ventre de chaudronnière grasse, avec son nez qui s'allongeait et se tortillait, lui soufflait un frisson dans les épaules, une peur mêlée d'un désir. Oui, on aurait dit la fressure de métal d'une grande gueuse, de quelque sorcière qui lâchait goutte à goutte le feu de ses entrailles." (2)

After she has become a victim of drink, when she would spend her last cent for a few drops, she feels still the horror of the machine:

"Et, de loin, elle contemplait la machine à souïler, en sentant que son malheur venait de là, et en faisant le rêve de s'achever avec de l'eau-de-vie, le jour où elle aurait de quoi." (3)

Zola never preaches. Neither does he make alcohol responsible directly for any one's downfall. Rather is it a treacherous poison always at work, gradually overpowering this one, then that one, when some fateful combination of circumstances gives it a chance. We see it at work in all stages of development. Coupeau's life

(1) L'Assommoir, p. 40.

(2) Id., p. 445.

(3) Id., p. 531.

from his fall till his death by delirium tremens is a vivid account of destruction by alcohol. Weakened by heredity, he drinks first occasionally, then incessantly. His moral sense is numbed, he becomes brutalized, and no details of his filthy orgies are spared. Père Bijard illustrates the unutterable cruelty of a drunkard -- he beats his wife and daughter to death. The dissipation of Gervaise's father is supposed to account for her flabby moral fiber as well as for her lameness, which her father caused by kicking her mother. Thus every phase is represented, even the second generation. /

Comparing La bodega and L'Assommoir, the latter is far more powerful in effect. La bodega is a vehicle for the expression of some socialistic ideas -- L'Assommoir, a section of life. It is in the former as if some one were telling us about a terrible scene, in the latter as if we ourselves were witnesses.

With the radical difference existing between the two books in setting and method, identical details are hardly to be expected. The one point in common is the thesis against alcoholism, which as has been shown is worked out differently. One slight resemblance is the personification of alcohol in La Bodega:

"Los toneles inmóviles, hinchados por la sangre ardorosa de sus vientres, con el pintarrajes de su mareas y escudas parecían viejos ídolos rodeados de una calma ultra terrena." (1)

Moreover, the ideal of the poor shepherd lad is suggestive of that of Gervaise: "Casáme, jartàme y morìme." (2)

(1) La bodega, p. 17.

(2) Id., p. 102.

But these details are common to many authors and can not be considered significant to the subject in hand. La bodega is thoroughly Spanish in setting, characters and problems. We may question the effectiveness of Blasco's technique, but it is at least individually his.

Another of Blasco's books which is comparable to L'Assommoir is La horda, which reveals the condition of the submerged classes of Madrid. At the door of the city, bustling with modern industry, preoccupied with new ideas, lives a mass of people in an almost primitive state -- rag pickers, whose means of subsistence is the refuse of others; poachers, stealing enough to eat from the king's pleasure grounds; gypsies, living in complete isolation from the society around them. The upper strata now happily oblivious, must awake to the realization that these apparently harmless unfortunates constitute a social menace. Like Attila's horde of old, they may invade civilization if no steps are taken toward improvement.

"El pasado, duro y cruel, la infancia del hombre, apenas despojado de su primitiva animalidad, acampaba a las puertas de una villa moderna." (1)

This viewpoint is obviously literary, even approaching the romantic. But although the sociological conclusions be somewhat removed from reality, the descriptions upon which they are based are strong and true to life. Blasco depicts the homes of "the horde", their character and limited scope of vision with a vigor

(1) La horda, p. 109.

that at times approaches crudity. Maltrana's grandmother is proud of her "profession". her "clients" are the best people in Madrid and she finds many treasures in their cast-offs. She scorns her daughter for marrying a mere brick-layer when she might have chose one of the honorable order of rag-pickers.

The story is an element far less important. Isidro Maltrana, son of a rag-pickers daughter and a bricklayer, becomes the protégé of a kind señora, who educates him. He is mentally capable of learning anything, and people predict a great career. But his degenerate blood appears in his moral, rather than his intellectual nature. His extreme egotism keeps him from doing work which he is able to do; a weak will and an indolent nature make it hard for him to achieve his higher aims. And so in failure he succumbs to an atrophying cynicism. When a pompous politician engages him to write a learned treatise on sociology, he feels that his career is begun and he takes Feli to live with him. She is pretty, totally uneducated, sharing in full Isidro's exalted opinion of his own worth. Of course disillusionment follows, but her devotion is unswerving. In poverty and distress he thinks only of himself; she, of him, too. When finally in a charity hospital, she gives birth to a son, and dies a lingering death, Isidro goes to see her but once. Not until he learns that her body was taken to the dissecting table, does he pity anyone but himself. That shocks and awakes him. Then when he sees their child, the man within him is fully aroused. He resolves to raise this child above the class from which he, himself, has never been able to break loose. His great ambition is to place his son among the oppressors. With

this purely selfish purpose in view, he sets out to conquer the obstacles which previously had thwarted him:

"Lo que no habían logrado la miseria y el triste destino de Feli lo conseguía aquel chiquitín con solo su contacto. Caía hecha polvo la herrumbre de su voluntad. Era otro hombre: su audacia consideraba con desprecio todos los obstáculos

"Maltrana decía a su hijo con el pensamiento ---
 -- Llegarás chiquitín. Yo marcharé a gatas delante de ti; abriré con mi lengua un camino en el barro para que avances sin ensuciarte." (1)

La horda has in common with L'Assommoir that the true protagonist is collective -- a community rather than an individual. Moreover, in both, the milieu is that of city slums. To be sure, the Parisian class depicted is not quite equivalent to that in La horda, for these rag-pickers and poachers represent a notch farther down in the social scale. But the intellectual, physical and especially the moral degeneration caused by poverty is an element in both.

Maltrana and Gervaise are examples of this force. The tragedy in the lives of each results from a weak moral nature, unable to withstand adverse circumstances. In each case the weakness is attributed to a poor heredity. They are characteristically improvident for the future. When Gervaise has money she spends it to satisfy her gormandism; Maltrana recklessly buys what he wants, regardless of the uncertainty of an income. They are similiarly

(1) La horda, p. 337.

indolent, drifting along in the current of events.

/ The psychological effect of poverty is accurately portrayed. Success makes one work, pay bills, attend to personal cleanliness. With increasing misfortunes come carelessness and neglect which make a turn for the better all the more impossible.

Again, however, the resemblance of the two is due to the fact that their protagonists are chosen from similar ranks of society, for the accompanying details and the methods of development are too widely divergent to warrant suspicion of imitation. Even their fundamental motives are different, for La horda carries a burden of propaganda. Blasco points out a social responsibility for the betterment of conditions. Whatever propaganda there may be in L'Assommoir is purely passive. One recoils from the picture and perhaps the emotional impetus is sufficiently strong to stir some people to action. / But primarily, Zola desired to work out his theory of heredity in the Parisian milieu with little regard for the effect upon his readers.

The unexpected hope extended at the end of La horda reminds one of Germinal. After a series of ever increasing calamities, comes a prophecy of a brighter future. The strike of the coal miners fails, the chief characters one by one meet a fearful death; labor once more yields to the oppression of capital. But in spite of this, Etienne, as he looks for the last time upon the fertile garden below which men, women and children are grinding away their lives in the mines, feels that conditions must and will change:

"Encore, encore, de plus en plus distinctement, comme s'ils se fussent rapprochés du sol, les camarades tapaient. Aux rayons enflammés de l'astre, par cette matinée de jeunesse, c'était de cette rumeur que la campagne était grosse. Des hommes poussaient, une armée noire, vengeresse. qui germait lentement dans les sillons, grandissant pour les récoltes du siècle futur, et dont la germination allait faire bientôt éclater la terre." (1)

In La horda there is hope for the individual, in Germinal hope for the race, both rising unexpectedly from misfortune and disaster. Etienne in Germinal advocates a socialistic brotherhood where each works and has his due:

Puisque le bon Dieu était mort, la justice allait assurer le bonheur des hommes, en faisant régner l'égalité et la fraternité. Une société nouvelle poussait en un jour, ainsi que dans les songes, une ville immense, d'une splendeur de mirage, où chaque citoyen vivait de sa tâche et prenait sa part des joies communes." (2)

Incited by this doctrine the miners strike. For months they endure untold hardship and privation, only to submit in the end to a régime as hard and unjust as before. Therefore, Zola's hopeful vision comes without preparation. It is a romantic idea such as the horde overwhelming the civilization of Madrid. In both Germinal and La horda the need for social betterment is recognized, but neither propounds a practicable social theory by which this may be done.

(1) Germinal, p. 591.

(2) Id., p. 188.

Blasco introduces the social problem into several of his novels. In La bodega there is an uprising which, like the strike in Germinal, fails. Blasco, however, blames the failure upon the impotence of the people without leadership; Zola, upon the power of capital which is too great to be broken by the strikers. Both men, from their intimate view of degraded society sense the danger which today is finding expression in strikes, Bolshevism and the power of the proletariat. In El Intruso, Blasco definitely predicts the future struggle. As in Germinal, the laborers in question are miners, who in their debasement constitute a social menace:

"Un ejército enemigo se ocultaba tras de aquellas montañas que cerraban el horizonte: una horda hambrienta que algun día caería sobre la población como en otros tiempos las gavillas del absolutismo. Bilbao estaba amenazada de un tercer sitio: pero en este ultimo no se detendría los enemigos ante las defensas exteriores; se esparcirían por las calles y bloquearían a la riqueza en sus magníficas viviendas. La guerra, que hasta entonces había sido en nombre del pasado, se repetiría en defensa del porvenir. Los nuevos sitiadores llevarían la miseria como bandera, y como grito de combate el derecho a la vida." (1)

In Germinal Zola portrays the life of the coal miners with an intensity equal to that of L'Assommoir. Their life in the mines and at home; their means of recreation --- every detail of existence is vividly painted. After this presentation of normal conditions, the rest of the book is concerned with the strike

(1) El Intruso, pp. 319-320.

of the miners of the Voreux. Zola could interpret well the spirit of the crowd and here the movement of the mob, the gradual quickening with anger and desperation, is very forcefully depicted. Zola's conception of man as the bête humaine especially fitted him for the portrayal of mob psychology, which represents the collective expression of instinctive violence and hatred that the individual is afraid to show.

El Intruso has one chapter which contains in a condensed form an account of the same life which Germinal describes at length. The setting is the iron mining district of Bilbao. The same general state of poverty and oppression exists here but the details differ. Whereas in Germinal, families have worked the mines for several generations, in El Intruso the population is made up of "floating" labor -- criminals and vagabonds from all parts of the country. Living conditions are consequently worse and the value of human life at a minimum. The vigorous exploitation of modern capital is more ruthless than the continuous oppression of the hereditary mine owners in Germinal. Blasco blames the "floating" condition of labor for the extremely bad circumstances, for there is not sufficient cohesion among the workers. As yet their strikes have been unavailing.

After a careful examination of the preceding books which treat the same subjects, the conclusion is inevitable that Blasco draws his material wholly from Spanish subjects and that details which are identical result from similiarity of

of conditions in Spain and France. He may, therefore, be freed from the charge of being an "afrancesado".

The analysis of similiar details has failed to take into consideration the motives of the two men in choosing their subjects. Again the charge might be brought that Blasco, although dealing with truly Spanish subjects, tried to depict Spanish life comparable to the French life in Zola's novels --- in other words, following the latter's method and choice of subjects, simply to produce Spanish versions of his novels.

Without doubt, Blasco was influenced by Zola's fearless handling of all situations. His works, like those of his friends in the naturalistic school, materially broadened the scope of literature and introduced new ideas of subject matter. Especially worthy of mention is Zola's portrayal of the social organism. The protagonist is very often an inanimate being, profoundly influencing the society represented -- for example, the distillery in L'Assommoir. The whole tendency had been to treat the individual without regard for the group, of which he is a part and which must mark his life. The treatment of the group composed of individual types, was a new departure and merited the attention and admiration it received.

Arroz y tartana, Blasco's first novel, shows that influence in its basic conception. It depicts the bourgeoisie of Valencia and the sacrifice of ideals and honor for social

position and wealth. This social problem is worked out by means of characters which are types rather than individuals. This, too, is Zola's customary treatment. Descriptions of local customs occupy many pages of the novel. But even this first novel bears the unmistakable imprint of Blasco's individuality. A deeper psychological analysis indicates a different attitude toward human life. Furthermore his method of description, his language and certain aesthetic touches are not like Zola.

After Cañas y barro, Blasco added a definite purpose of propaganda to his naturalistic portrayals of life. The religious, social and political situations were sadly in need of reform and he wished to arouse the people to action. His over-eagerness to make these needs evident caused him to emphasize propaganda to the detriment of his novels. He not only shows the deplorable conditions which need to be improved, but he advances a constructive program --- which often is far from practicable. An example of this is Salva-tierra in La bodega. His teachings are rather vague and unconvincing. Far stronger are the views of Dr. Aresti in El Intruso. In contrast to the hypocritical piety of the Jesuits he advances this theory:

"Hacer el bien a los semejantes, sin esperanza de recompensa ni miedo al castigo, como lo hacemos los impíos modernos, los hombres del materialismo, es ser más idealista que el devoto que compra una parte de paraíso con oraciones, que no

remediar ningún mal en la tierra." (1)

On the other hand, Zola's propagandism is purely passive. The social theory of Etienne in Germinal is not a success -- Zola does not mean it to be his. In L'Assommoir, the excess of the debauchery caused by alcohol might be enough to turn people against it. But that is not played upon as a definite thesis. Rather does Zola have the scientific point of view -- mere observation of phenomena. He wanted to work out his natural and physiological history of a family and desired to trace the behaviour of his character in such a milieu. In La Terre enters the economic problem of a tariff which should protect the farmers from the low price of imported wheat which makes them lose money on their crops. The evil is recognized, but no means of improvement suggested.

Blasco, therefore, has a different attitude toward his subject. In his manner of life, he was more closely in touch with actuality, and so was more deeply concerned with the betterment of conditions. On the other hand, Zola's primary interest was his literary theory. It would be unfair to base positive statements in regard to their respective purposes upon the few novels under consideration. However they give the impression stated above.

(1) El Intruso, pp. 249-250.

Chapter III

Since a certain frankness in Blasco's manner of giving unpleasant details has, more than anything else, caused his appellation, "The Spanish Zola", a careful analysis of the naturalistic technique of each man is of basic importance of this thesis.

The creed of the naturalists was verosimilitude. Guy de Maupassant in his introduction to Pierre et Jean said that it was necessary to avoid not only the imaginary, but even the actual happening which savoured of the unusual or romantic. It was their desire to choose scenes, events or characters which should produce a complete illusion of reality. Their interest was entirely objective and impersonal. Such a purpose would necessarily seek expression in a description of external appearance, rather than in psychological analysis. A materialistic philosophy strengthened this inclination, causing less attention to the individual, more to the group and environment.

Flaubert, leader of the French school, sought to describe an object with such nicety and precision that it could be mistaken for nothing else in the world. The same tendency toward exactness made him suit the vocabulary to the milieu concerned --- use the same words the people used and in the same way. He never attempted to enter upon technicalities unless he knew perfectly the whole operation involved. Guy de Maupassant avoided them altogether.

Zola filled many pages of his novels with detailed description. The physical characteristics of each person mentioned had to be definitely stated -- hair, eyes, complexion, stature, clothing etc. The appearance and arrangement of furniture in a room; the number of rooms in a lodging -- all had to be set down. Neither does any technical process, nor any piece of machinery escape him; for example, in L'Assommoir the description of the lavoir (1); the process of chain making (2); the forge (3); etc. In spite of the kaleidoscopic effect occasionally produced, Zola does not differ greatly in this respect from others of the same school.

Zola's idiosyncrasy was his determination to make his novels scientific. He borrowed not only the method of Claude Bernard, but also the subject matter. For his avowed purpose in the Rougon-Macquart series was to show all the maladies and abnormalities resulting from an inherited neurosis. Consequently, his books are filled with descriptions of physical processes, normal and abnormal, which had never before appeared in a novel. Sixteen pages of L'Assommoir are devoted to the horrors of Coupeau's death by delirium tremens. In La Débâcle, Zola dwells upon the operations of the army surgeon. La Terre leaves nothing in the whole category of animal processes to the imagination. One feels after reading this book that the following comment is well justified:

(1) L'Assommoir, p.15.

(2) Id., p. 67.

(3) Id., p. 209 ff.

"En fait, le réalisme d'Emile Zola consiste en des peintures jusqu'alors inédites, comme la crudité de cette saillie de taureau au premier chapitre de La Terre, la peinture de tous ces coïts quand la semence de Jean tombe à terre et celle de Buteau sur les cuisses de Françoise, et les détails physiologiques et intestinaux de Jésus-Christ. Et toutes les autres scènes qui se donne carrière la sensualité lubrique de son romantisme." (1)

He depicts child-birth in both L'Assommoir and La Terre, in the latter giving very specific details. Nor is there a scene sufficiently vile or disgusting to escape his pen. Even in common-place matters he is unnecessarily exact; as, for example, in describing the life of the Maheu family in Germinal. He tells about the process each goes through during his bath. After finishing with the children he takes the father:

"Lui, tout nu, accroupi devant le baquet, y avait d'abord plongé sa tête, frottée de ce savon noir dont l'usage séculaire décolore et jaunit les cheveux de la race. Ensuite, il entra dans l'eau, s'enduisit la poitrine, le ventre, les bras, les cuisses, se les racla énergiquement des deux poings." (2)

To most people the procedure of a bath is sufficiently familiar to allow such particulars to be omitted without injuring the realism of the story.

(1) Martineau, Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola, p. 232.

(2) Germinal, p. 127.

It is on account of these crudities, which grate on the finer sensibilities, that Zola is not more extensively read, in spite of his vivid representation of life.

Zola adds to his effect by writing in the language of the people. He does not insert it in the conversation of his characters to add local color, but he uses it consistently all the way through. The language of the lower classes is, no doubt, filled with obscenities, and Zola omits none. Such a description as that of the fight between Gervaise and Virginie at the lavoir, with the names they hurl at one another, their ferocity and indecency, may be accurate for such a setting, but it is an innovation for anything called literature. It is said that Zola derived many of these opprobrious terms from a Dictionnaire de la langue verte (1) and he must have thumbed it well. He invariably chooses the colloquial, in preference to the standard word, such as crever for mourir, avalier for manger. The following passage picked at random from *Germinal* is full of similiar expressions:

"Cinq heures sonnaient, lorsque la Pierronne vint savoir si c'était avec Jeanlin que sa Lydie avait filé. Levaque répondit que ça devait être quelque chose comme ça, car Bébert, lui aussi, avait disparu; et ces galopins gourgandinaient toujours ensemble. Quand Maheu les eut tranquillisés en parlant de la salade de pissenlits, lui et le camarade se mirent à attaquer la jeune femme, avec une crudité de bons

(1) See Henry James, Notes on Novelists, p. 107.

diabiles. Elle s'en fâchait, mais ne s'en allait pas, chatouillée au fond par les gros mots, qui la faisaient crier, las mains au ventre. Il arriva à son secours une femme maigre, dont la colère bégayante ressemblait à un gloussement de poule. D'autres, au loin, sur les portes, s'effarouchaient de confiance. Maintenant, l'école était fermée, toute la marmaille traînait, c'était un grouillement de petits êtres piaulant, se roulant, se battant." (1)

This choice of words is effective in never allowing the reader to forget in what atmosphere the action develops, but the very insistence is unpleasant. If, however, Zola's pictures are accurate, the charge of undue coarseness might find defense. This brings up the question of the validity of his documentation.

Flaubert believed that to describe naturalistically one should know the subject thoroughly, having observed it through a period of time until every idiosyncrasy is revealed. Zola, on the other hand, was satisfied with a mere examination. If he were to describe a carpenter, he went to the carpenter's house, observing every detail, taking minute and copious notes. Then he got all the information he could from his friends or acquaintances, who were familiar with the milieu to be considered. Fitting anecdotes were recorded, books consulted. Since he was interested particularly in medicine, he would look up the diseases prevalent

in the class of people he was describing. His notes for Germinal contain a long chart of every disease to which miners are subject. (1) When he wrote Faute de l'abbé Mouret, which deals with church and religion, he had his table piled with religious books for months. His characters, he drew from his family, his friends or some character of fiction or history which had struck his fancy. In this way he amassed a great quantity of notes:

"Sans choix, sans ordre, pêle-mêle, l'inventeur du roman expérimental entasse les documents. Ses dossiers regorgent de papiers insipides, d'où émergent de temps à autres de curieuses révélations." (2)

Dr. Henri Martineau in Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola made a specific study of the medical aspect of Les Rougon Macquart. He shows that Zola, having never studied medicine, was not circumspect in his selection of sources. Moreover, his attention was attracted to the striking phrase, which he would set down with little regard for the context. Then, in detail, Dr. Martineau reveals the medical errors Zola commits in his descriptions of various diseases and physical processes. Confirming his decision that the value of scientific data in Zola's work is lacking, are quotations from eminent authorities. (3)

(1) Martineau, Le Roman Scientifique d'Emile Zola, pp. 65-66

(2) Id., pp. 61-62.

(3) Id., pp. 253-260

In spite of multitudinous details, therefore, Zola is not an accurate naturalist, for he makes all characters, all episodes conform to preconceived ideas. Man is ever la bête humaine, for such was Zola's philosophy. He simplified characters and event to form an ensemble, which is powerful but not naturalistic. In the books dealing with the lower classes of Paris, and especially in L'Assommoir he adheres more closely to the truth, for that life he had lived and knew thoroughly. *Germinal*, too, is one of the more realistic novels. One not knowing French peasant life, can not judge of the verosimilitude of La Terre. The utter moral abandon and extreme crudity seems exaggerated. But even if his representation is true, the effect is heightened by the pornographic details which add nothing to the impression of the peasantry and need not have been mentioned.

If Blasco Ibáñez were a disciple of Zola, he would probably adopt the same naturalistic technique. Since he is a naturalist, it is to be expected that he have many descriptions. The introduction of each character is accompanied by a word, a phrase or a sentence to give an idea of his physical appearance as well as his relation to the action. Note for example these quotations from Cañas y barro:

"El barquero, un hombrecillo enjuto, con una oreja amputada ..."

"El dueño de la taberna, un hombre enorme, hinchado de vientre hidrópico ---- apoyándose en sumujer, Neleta, pequeña

con el rojo cabello alborotado y ojos verdes y vivos que parecían acariciar con la suavidad del terciopelo." (1)

In Arroz y tartana his descriptions are more prolix than in the other regional novels. He is interested in portraying Valencian life and digresses often from the thread of the story to picture some local custom or scene. The market place in Valencia, la Carnaval, Fiesta de San José, Jueves Santo, Las Pascuas, la Vela de Corpus, la Alameda and la Bolsa are among the scenes depicted. In fact Blasco brings in more extraneous matter for the pure pleasure of description than does Zola --- the gypsies in La horda, for instance, whose life and customs have no relation to the story.

However Blasco's manner description differs from the French school in that it is more impressionistic. Although he gives details, he does not stop with every person or thing mentioned to tell all of its specific qualities. Zola fills pages and pages depicting a house with all the rooms in the house and the furnishings of the particular room under consideration. On the other hand, the description of the innkeeper quoted above, presents features which are significant because they are indicative of the inner man as well as his external appearance. Blasco does not dwell with such minuteness upon a single object as does Zola. There is, especially in Cañas y barro a simplicity of presentation which

(1) Cañas y barro, p. 8.

grips the attention of the reader.

This difference is easily explicable by Blasco's manner of writing. In contrast to Zola's document of preliminary notes, Blasco had no record whatever. His keen power of observation was accompanied by a memory which always retained the salient features. But no memory could hold as many specific details as could a note book. There is a greater tendency to record the sensation produced, rather than the mere aspect of an object. El Intruso contains descriptions of the steel works at Bilbao. Instead of utilizing technical terms, Blasco gives the impression of the scene by means of similes and metaphors.

"Iba a comenzar la colada. Ya no era una estrella lo que se abría en la tierra refractaria: era una gran hostia de fuego, un sol de color de cereza con ondulaciones verdes, que abrasaba los ojos hasta cegarlos." (1)

This sentence is typical in the mention of color and also the subjective effect. Blasco's sensorial faculties are unusually keen. In describing such a place as the steel mill, the image fixed in his mind consists of the sensory stimuli --- the effect produced upon him as well as the objective details such as an engineer would remember. This strengthens rather than weakens the power of his description, for the subjective element helps the reader to visualize the scene more completely.

(1) El Intruso, p. 151.

Blasco, no more than Zola, follows Flaubert's manner of long and thorough study of a milieu before describing it. That this method does produce the best naturalistic results has, nevertheless, evidence in its favor. For Blasco's best naturalistic works are his first novels dealing with Valencian life with which he was perfectly familiar. From boyhood associations he knew la Albufera, la huerta and all the intimate characteristics of Valencian life. Just as L'Assommoir is one of Zola's best works, Cañas y barro and La barraca represent the greatest achievements of Blasco.

Blasco believed that he must personally experience the things which he described, and made many exciting trips for this purpose. He risked his life to go on a poacher's expedition to the royal reserves and at one time almost lost it when a smuggler's vessel, upon which he was investigating their mode of life, was shipwrecked. His documentation was serious, therefore, but relatively hasty. Relying entirely upon his memory, he is less meticulous and more intuitive than Zola.

Lack of accuracy is not, however, as serious a charge against Blasco as against Zola, for he had no scientific pretensions. It is rare that he enters upon technicalities, and never into a field requiring as specific a knowledge as medicine.

Blasco does not attempt to use the language of the people.

Occasionally, in direct discourse, he uses dialectical forms, especially in the Valencian stories. Aside from this, he employs the usual literary diction. When the terminology of a certain region is individual Blasco is naturalistic to the extent of employing these specific terms as far as possible; but the coarse language of the common people, never.

In addition to the choice of vocabulary, the type of details described marks a striking difference. The scenes in the Spanish novels, while they are often unpleasantly realistic, are always decent. In Cañas y barro, there are many places which make us shudder, but our sense of propriety is not injured. In the legend of the Albufera, a huge serpent crushes her former playmate in her coils, and Blasco does not spare us the agonizing details. Even more repulsive is the sight of the body of the new-born babe which Tonet had thrown into the lake:

"Vió junto a la borda de su barco un lío de trapos, y en él, algo lívido y gelatinoso erizado de sanguijuelas: una cabecita hinchada, deforme, negruzca, con las cuencas vacías y colgando de una de ellas el globo de un ojo: todo tan repugnante, tan hediondo, que parecía entenebreecer repentinamente el agua y el espacio, haciendo que en pleno sol cayese la noche sobre el lago." (1)

Nothing could be more horrible --- but it is not obscene. Furthermore such passages are comparatively

(1) Cañas y barro, p. 277.

rare and certainly the one quoted above is one of the most gruesome in the whole of his production.

When Zola does not indulge in pornographic detail, there is often great similiarity between the descriptions of the two men. In La Terre and Arroz y tartana the likeness is great enough to make one suspect that Blasco may have received a suggestion from Zola. The occasion is a family dinner to which relatives, in both cases avaricious, are invited:

"Alors, ce fut un massacre, un engloutissement: les poulets, les lapins, les viandes défilèrent, disparurent, au milieu d'un terrible bruit de mâchoires. Très sobres chez eux, ils se crevaient d'indigestion chez les autres." (1)

Not only are the "acoustic properties" of a meal depicted in Arroz y tartana, but also the idea of saving the board-bill:

"Todos comían con apetito, especialmente don Juan, que a pesar de su sobriedad de avaro era un tragón terrible al estar en mesa ajena.....Nadie hablaba aun. Oíase únicamente el sordo ruido de las mandíbulas; todos masticaban y engullían; los tenedores verificaban correrías devastadores sobre la mesa." (2)

This is an undeniable trace of Zola in Blasco's work, such as can be occasionally found in his earlier production. And it is this kind of realistic detail which Blasco scatters through all of his novels. Farther than this, he does not go.

(1) La Terre, p. 186.

(2) Arroz y tartana, p. 88.

It is not that Blasco does not approach the sensual or the erotic. Entre naranjos and Mare Nostrum furnish notable examples of this quality. In the specific group under consideration, La horda and La bodega have sensual touches. But his descriptions have the thrill of passion, the carnal pleasure of mutual love. The love element is lacking in Zola, leaving the human being an animal whose instincts are aroused by the presence of an individual of the other sex. Blasco is more voluptuous, Zola more animalistic. In his first group of novels, this element is present only in Entre naranjos. Cañas y barro, for example, is the story of an illegitimate love affair, but there is slight trace of sensualism in the book.

There are certain features of their description which are alike. One of these is the extensive use of simile and metaphor. Such comparison is effective in giving just the impression desired. For instance, "La Grande" (La Terre) whose outstanding characteristic is her avarice, is pictured as a bird of prey:

"Elle avait la tête décharnée d'un oiseau de proie, sur un long cou flètre, couleur de sang. Le nez de la famille, chez elle se recourbait en bec terrible." (1)

Even more frequent are the examples in Blasco's books. In the descriptions of the steel mills, a portion of which

(1) La Terre, p. 31.

is quoted above, almost every sentence contains a comparison which helps the reader to visualize the process.

Another trait which they have in common is the appeal to the senses other than sight. We not only see an object, but we feel it, hear it, smell it. Especially is this last sense prominent in their books. Zola accompanies all of his darkest scenes with fitting odors --- the dark, dank smell of an old tenement; the asphyxiating odor of decaying flesh as in La Débâcle.¹ Blasco is equally vivid in olfactory stimulations. Permeating the atmosphere of Cañas y barro is the viscous, fishy smell of the Albufera. He finishes the description of the neighborhood girls in La barraca with "atrevidos decharachos, y olor de salud, de miembros ásperos y duros". (1) That element is never lacking and in the works of both, it reinforces the impression, especially the unpleasant one, for nothing is more repulsive than disagreeable odors.

After having discusses the naturalistic technique of the two, the question arises as to which is the more successful in attaining an "illusion of reality". Whether or not their pictures are accurate representations, is of relatively slight importance. Only a small proportion of the reading public can judge their exact conformity to the truth. But if, after a book is finished, the reader retains the impression that he has caught a glimpse of life, the naturalist

(1) La barraca, p.123.

has achieved his purpose.

Zola's method is photographic. His enumeration of minute details make a very complete picture, the only danger being that it produce a blurred impression. For in life, our attention fixes itself upon certain objects and the rest of the things in our range of vision remain unseen. Moreover, our perception of those objects is in terms of general effect. For instance, on meeting a person for the first time we have an impression of his size, appearance, manner of dress and, most of all, his personality. Seldom does anyone stop to notice an individual feature, unless it is unusual. It is on account of this habitual procedure that it is more tedious to read an author who gives all the details than one who gives impressions, for instead of merely "getting the idea", we have to stop to piece the picture together. The author should render this possible by careful arrangement of his material and the reader must take time to visualize it. With this cooperation, however, the final image is more complete than that resulting from generalizations.

Zola's descriptions produce a lasting impression. While one is reading L'Assommoir, the feeling may be, "I don't care what the street vendors look like -- let's see what happens to Gervaise". But after the last page is finished, the image of the little shop in the street Goutte d'Or, L'assommoir of père Colombe, and the whole life in that section is vivid

and clear cut.

There are some incidents which appear so exaggerated that it seems as if they must be the production of an overwrought imagination. In Germinal, for example, when Etienne and Catherine in the pitchy blackness leans down from their little ledge to drink and her lips meet the moustache of Chaval, her so-called lover, whom Etienne had killed and who for three days has been floating near them. Moreover, the sexual promiscuity of the miners surpasses anything which the reader can readily believe. These characteristics mar the verisimilitude during the reading, but when the book is finished, they blend into the whole to give a truly realistic effect. Especially in L'Assommoir and Germinal is this true. In these, Zola achieves an illusion of reality. The picture in La Terre is more doubtful and in La Débâcle the image is vague. While the battle of Sedan is realistically described it is told from so many different points of view that the result is a confused idea of a very bloody event. It is not that the impression seems untrue, but it is less distinct than that of the other books. Generally speaking, however, Zola's method does give a naturalistic effect.

In each of Blasco's works, there are some admirable descriptions. But a certain looseness in organization keeps the whole from seeming a vivid representation of real life. In spite of unrivaled single descriptions, the ensemble does

not produce a sensation of having been in touch with actuality. Sometimes it is propaganda which disturbs the impression; sometimes the presentation is not sufficiently distinct.

Cañas y barro stands out as a notable exception. La Albufera, teeming with an oozy, gelatinous form of life, seems to have a genuine and perceptible individuality. The characters are a part of it --- real human beings who are in accord with their environment. Here the illusion of reality is powerfully wrought. La barraca, to a lesser extent possesses the same quality. The reader feels that he knows the people and the personality of the huerta. In the case of Zola the question is one of accumulative effect; of Blasco, the intensity of the original impression.

Chapter III

Another phase upon which comparison may be based is the manner in which a novel is constructed, for the fundamental frame work is a matter of as much individuality as the details which are superimposed thereon. Some authors vary their patterns, but a great majority use the same ones, depending upon different incidents, characters and motives to avoid monotony. To this second class belong Zola and Blasco.

In each of the four books examined Zola is concerned with a social group, which, considered as a whole overshadows the individual importance. *Germinal*, for instance, is really the history of a multitude. But as an impersonal multitude is too unwieldy to be handled, Zola's portrayal is from the personal point of view. He begins with a member of the Rougon Macquart family, since that is the connecting link of his series. Then through his eyes and experience, the milieu and characters involved in the book are introduced. In Germinal it is with Etienne that we catch sight of the mines, approach and examine the exterior. Later we descend with him and become acquainted with the routine of actual mining. In order to bring us in touch with the sordidness and drudgery of the miner's existence, Zola introduces the Maheu family and depicts with great intimacy the inner workings of their household. For the life in the coron it is necessary to broaden

the circle, individualizing as many people as types are needed to give a clear idea of the community. Then by means of this rather large number of people known to the reader by name, the mob can be graphically presented during the strike. The increased vividness of such a method is evident, for instead of nameless strikers here and there committing violence or receiving injury, it is Chaval, Maheu, "La Mouquette," etc.

Such is the usual procedure of Zola. Around the particular Rougon Macquart concerned, swarms the life of some social group, which is the real protagonist. And it is by means of the particular and specific that he makes his presentation. This manner of description from personal viewpoint has great power within certain limits, but the danger is that it become mechanical. If a character has a real purpose in the story, to add color to the medium or motive to the plot, it is distinctly advantageous to see a scene through his eyes. But occasionally one feels that a person has been dragged in only to give excuse for description. In La Débâcle Zola, in describing the battle of Sedan from all points of view, tells the experiences of several men in whom we are slightly interested, merely because one is in the cavalry, one in the artillery, etc.

The meticulous manner in which Zola organizes his material is responsible for a very definite outline underlying

each of his novels and although this does not protrude, it is easily visible on close examination. He distributed his subject matter into parts and chapters of uniform length, and in each a definite bit of ground had to be covered. Everything manifests evidence of a scrupulous preparation which at times makes the result appear mechanical.

It is customary to analyse plot when studying a novel. That is difficult in the case of naturalistic productions, for it is desirable that they have the semblance of bits of human history. In life the threads of circumstances are woven together in as strange and curious patterns as in the most fantastic of romantic stories. But instead of being isolated into a brilliant unit, they are inextricable mingled with the drab of the commonplace. Moreover, there is an endlessness about real existence. Something is always beginning, something always ending. It is only in fiction that a selected group of characters may appear, who, untouched by other happenings, act out their little adventure with climax, catastrophe and dénouement, then live "happily everafter". In naturalistic novels, one finds a series of related episodes, rather than a complex plot. There need not be a climax or dénouement. The line fluctuates with alternate hope and despair, fortune and misfortune, and in Zola's books the general slope of every line seems to be downward, leaving at the end a feeling of the futility of human endeavor.

A force often predominating over the course of events, is an inanimate object personified, which is symbolic of the central thought. In L'Assommoir the distillery spreads the malicious influence of alcohol, insidiously leading those weak by nature or discouraged by misfortune to inevitable ruin. The throbbing engine in Germinal which undermines its own base, stands for the incessant hopeless struggle of human creatures against an inexorable destiny. This symbolic element serves to unite the whole into a powerful ensemble. Such an element could not have great significance when there is a complication of incidents resolved by human beings portrayed as active, efficient agents. But here man is subordinate to the intangible will of nature. In Zola's works, therefore, description of life and nature occupies the place of first importance, since those are the ruling forces which govern the actions of men. Nor is there anything to call the attention away from this central theme. He does not interrupt the course of events to introduce propaganda nor does the development of the heredity thesis receive emphasis. Zola was careful, however, to mingle description and conversation, in order to avoid too solid an effect. He made frequent use of indirect dialogue, especially for quotations of considerable length.

Turning to the examination of Blasco's technique, one feature is present in all his works. He begins invariably with the presentation of three or four characters taken from

the center of the action which is to follow. The scene is long enough to give the setting and the nature of the main characters. The events in this chapter are often episodic, having no place in the plot. Sometimes this scene is a cuadro de costumbres as in Arroz y tartana; sometimes it is a passing review of the characters and the milieu as in Cañas y barro. After this, Blasco reverts -- usually one or two generations--- and begins the story. He often spends so much time with the grandfather or father of the main characters, that the reader wonders whom the story really concerns. Of the two hundred ninety three pages in Cañas y barro, one hundred four are introductory, being utilized in bringing the story up to the time of the principal action. But in that space, we become thoroughly acquainted with the Albufera, tío Paloma, Toni and Tonet. The presentation is skillfully done in this book, although in others, the introductory pages are tedious.

Blasco individualizes fewer characters than Zola, so that the group which constitutes the background, although a definite entity, is indistinct. For example, in La horda we understand that there are many rag-pickers' hovels, but we see only one. The malicious neighbors of La barraca are on all sides, but Pimentó and his wife alone we know by name. This method has a double effect; it centers more attention upon the leading characters, but the setting is more vague.

The plots of Blasco's books have the naturalistic character of seeming to be the narration of a part of human history. In Cañas y barro the plot, so called, is the love affair between Tonet and Neleta. The interest of the reader is held, however, by no complication of incident, but by the life history of Tonet. The real theme is the tragedy of a weak willed egotist, ruined by a soulless woman. The threads are tangled in such a way that they lead to an inevitable conclusion, usually tragic. In nearly every case, the portrayal of the medium is far more important than the element of plot. Especially in his propaganda novels is plot greatly reduced. The story of La bodega could easily be told in fifty of the three hundred seventy two pages. Blasco seems to be carried away by the "idea", and to forget that he is writing a novel instead of a social thesis. There is often a lack of proportion and coordination due, without doubt, to his habit of writing rapidly. There is far too much disconnected description in Arroz y tartana, while in El Intruso, the propaganda against the Jesuits receives undue emphasis. La barraca and Cañas y barro may be counted as exceptions, for in them all elements are well blended.

Whereas Zola uses indirect dialogue occasionally, Blasco employs it almost to the exclusion of direct discourse. Although effective when used in moderation, too much of this is heavy and tends to deaden the book.

Summing up the differences and likenesses of Zola's and Blasco's method of construction, it becomes evident that the similarity is not great. They have the episodic type of plot and unusual stress upon the milieu in common with other members of the naturalistic school. A few minor details, such as the use of indirect dialogue and description from a personal standpoint are alike. But the general architecture is different. Blasco has few characters, Zola many; there is rarely more than a single thread of story in Blasco's fooks, while in Zola's there are often several. Blasco habitually makes his presentation of milieu and characters in an introductory chapter which does not necessarily have any connection with the following action, after which he goes back to give the preceding history. Zola has no break of this kind. He spends more time in getting the scene and characters before our eyes, but it is all in the course of the story. Furthermore Zola's novels are more homogeneous than Blasco's for the latter often stops to discuss social or political problems, or to describe some extraneous scene. Blasco's naturalistic works are shorter, hence the development is more rapid and less detailed.

Both novelists have touched almost every field of modern society and it is of interest to note that the most successful works of each man have pictured the lower classes. In the case of Zola, we can see that his personal experience as well as his philosophy fitted him to describe the sordid life of the socially and economically oppressed.

The conduct of the man whose intellectual and spiritual development has been stunted, can be explained much more readily by his physical instincts than that of his more fortunate brother. More than that, the whole technique of Zola's naturalism seemed to be evolved to portray the baser, not the finer side of human nature.

Blasco Ibáñez is a man of the people -- strong and passionate --- who knows how to interpret turbulent life. He is like Sorolla in art. The refined atmosphere of the upper classes is not his natural element and when he pictures it, his novels are far less convincing. Therefore, with this basic characteristic in common, many likenesses can be traced between the authors of La Terre and of La barraca, in spite of radical differences in temperament.

Chapter IV

In a work of literature, description and technique are secondary to the portrayal of human character. The achievement which makes a piece of fiction universal is the creation of a real character in whom thoughts and emotions common to everyone are interpreted with psychological accuracy. Such a character becomes a reality and stands out clearly in the mind of the reader after the other elements of the novel have become blurred and indistinct.

Zola introduces many personages into his books. But, as mentioned in the discussion of the preceding chapter, a large proportion are presented merely to add color to the background. Zola's interest is collective --- he emphasizes the group in preference to the individual. On account of this, his characters are often types which, when combined, form a vivid reproduction of the mass, but when viewed separately, appear vague and colorless. The piquancy of individuality is sacrificed to heighten the power of the sum total. One proof of this is the difficulty with which one recalls even a few of the many names after having finished a book. There are, of course, exceptions.

Gervaise of L'Assommoir is more than a typical woman of her class. She becomes an entity in the mind of the reader. In the vicious environment of the Parisian slums, she is abandoned with her two children. We watch with in-

terest the battle between her inherent moral weakness and the forces of this environment. By a dogged determination, entirely consistent with her submissive nature, she rises little by little. Quite as comprehensible is the gradual decay of all finer sensibilities until the lowest depths of degradation are reached. The place one might question is the turning point. Zola explains it by the outcropping of the inherent neurosis in the form of gormandism. The moral collapse of Coupeau makes an added burden. But matched against both of these degenerative forces, is the psychological stimulus of success, which can buoy up the weakest nature. Notwithstanding possible flaws in the psychological analysis, Gervaise remains a real person who lives and fights her battle, though it be a losing one.

Jean Macquart of La Terre and La Débâcle, although a neutral figure is one to be remembered. He is one whom misfortune always overtakes in spite of earnest efforts. His personality is neither striking nor attractive, but it is essentially manly. Had Françoise loved him, his sturdy nature would have withstood every temptation through fidelity to her. The realization that she does not, brings him to a state of pessimistic resignation. He has failed; the prejudice of the people can not be conquered, and he returns to the old wandering life of the army.

In La Débâcle he is the same undemonstrative man, enduring with fortitude the worst conditions. The idealistic

friendship between him and Maurice reveals the fine qualities which underlie his rough exterior. For Jean, Maurice, being a man of culture and education represents that higher world, which, although incomprehensible, is yet to be worshipped. To him Jean willingly sacrifices the last of his rations; the place of greater safety or comfort. That he should unknowingly kill Maurice in the Communist war in Paris is a piece of gratuitous tragedy.

Occasionally one finds an outstanding character in the secondary group. Jacqueline of La Terre is the most base of women, but she possesses nevertheless a dominant personality. Her desire is to get control of her master and she reaches her goal by clever and insidious methods. "La Grande" by the very fact of her colossal avarice is an interesting figure. Years have not loosened her tenacious grasp on her worldly possessions nor have they softened her heart. She shuts the door in her brother's face when want drives him to her; she starves her grandchildren without a qualm of conscience. But to the many weak overridden women, this iron-willed octogenarian affords a contrast which is almost pleasant.

Zola, furthermore, introduces an element which is comparatively rare in naturalistic novels --- that of humor. Hyacinthe, alias "Jésus Christ" and his daughter "La Trouille", although beyond the pale of ordinary decency, are a humorous couple ---he with his gracious amiability induced by alcohol,

and she by so instinctive a lack of the semblance of morality that her pranks seem those of a clever little animal, rather than of a corrupt girl.

The range of the characters which Zola creates is not extended. A monotonous undercurrent of bestiality is ever present, tingeing the better characters with grossness and turning the worst ones into the most consummate of human brutes. It is this sordid sameness which is oppressive to the mind of the reader, rather than the extremity to which his degenerates go. Among his men characters one finds the little-souled miser such as Lorilleux, the chain maker of L'Assommoir, the rogue with an aspect of gentility, such as Lantier; the drunkard such as Coupeau, the moral degenerate of all varieties down to the absolute pervert, the boy Jeanlin in Germinal. But all of them, regardless of degrees of enlightenment or integrity make evident the dreariness and futility of life. There is no one with a keen, red-blooded joy of living, nor one with a spirituality deep enough to catch a vision of sustaining ideals.

Zola's women approach more nearly a dead level than his men. The great majority are yielding and subservient to the whims of men. Although of varying degrees of honest, they are denied the least spark of intellectuality. Henriette of La Débâcle, for example, more nearly approaches the noble type of womanhood than any other. She is unswerving faith-

ful to her brother and her husband, and would willingly sacrifice herself for their sakes. Although mentally undeveloped, Henriette is an exception among the many who have no claim to the finer qualities and are as generally tainted with animalism as the men.

Zola's characters are uniformly simple in psychology, being motivated by a single idea, a single passion, and their aim in life is to satisfy this idea or passion. Père Fouan was a slave to his land; Lantier was led by his love of luxury; La Grande by avarice; Gervaise by gluttony and examples could be indefinitely multiplied. Since his thesis was physiological, the most common inciting agent is that of the two physical hungers --- special emphasis being placed on sexual desire. Fundamental as are these appetites in human life, their importance is here unduly exaggerated. One essential difference between man and the highest of the animals is that he is capable of a mental and spiritual life which rises above the purely physical.

Thus, Zola's characters are individuals from whose natures have been taken psychological complexity and spirituality and who, handicapped by unconquerable hereditary weaknesses, struggle in a grim and dreary fight against the blind forces of their environment. There are not great contrasts of strength and weakness, but rather a monotony of little souls and torpid minds.

Blasco Ibáñez excels in the portrayal of virile manhood. It seems, indeed, that by a projection of his own dynamic personality he creates the characters of iron will, his fighters who struggle against great odds. Toni of Cañas y barro, Batiste of La barraca are strong and resolute. No task daunts them by its difficulty or immensity. But they are opposed by blind powers stronger than they -- nature, human prejudice, or an unkind destiny, against which they fight to the end. Sánchez Morueta in El Intruso gained his high position of wealth and power by his own unceasing efforts. He is a giant turned into a puppet by the enervating influence of the Jesuits who reach him through his wife and daughter. Many more are the protagonists whose life is a constant combat against men and nature -- for land, for money, for love, for power, for everything men value. That they must succumb in the end is a reflection of Blasco's own philosophy. Progress is slow and the efforts of one man are unavailing against age-old powers. Therefore the end of life should be action for its own sake and not for the work achieved.

In contrast to these, are weaklings such as Tonet, (Cañas y barro), egotistic, indolent, without will-power. Another is Juanito (Arroz y tartana) who dares but once in his life to oppose his mother, who did not care for him, yet used him for her selfish purposes. Moments of power come to the weak, moments of weakness to the strong. The contrast and interplay of these two types heighten the effect of reality.

Blasco's women characters may be divided into the broad classifications of the submissive woman, and the one of dominant personality. The bond of the latter class is a firm determination to gain some end, the type differing according to the objective. Doña Manuela (Arroz y tartana) aspired to a high position in the society to which a display of wealth and manners "à la mode" are the open sesame. To this ambition she sacrifices everything. But she is very different from Doña Cristina (El Intruso) who devoted all of her energies to the Jesuit religion. Neleta, child of the Albufera wanted Tonet. As a youth he trifled with her love, then departed, leaving her cold and mercenary and without a vestige of soul -- if, perchance, she ever had one. On the surface she is suave and dutiful, but a cat-like glint of her green eyes is a revelation of the callous and designing woman within. After she has gained wealth and position on the island but onething remains to complete her satisfaction--Tonet. So she sets her trap, catches her prey and makes him so entirely her possession that ultimately death is his only means of release. Her will is of such resistant texture that nothing can make her flinch or change her course of action.

Far more numerous are the women characters who bend submissively before their fathers, brothers or husbands. Feli, Tómica, Pepeta -- the list is long. Their poor starved existences crave love and protection, but without even these returns, they spend a life of drudgery and unquestioning devotion.

A general comparison of the characters of Zola and Blasco shows the fundamental likeness of simplicity in psychological motivation. Blasco's protagonists are men and women of one idea, to the attainment of which they devote their entire mind and strength. It is this centralization of effort which causes the intensity of the battle and the totality of the ultimate defeat. However, Blasco does not carry the process of simplification to the point of making the physiological govern the psychological, as Zola tries to do. Even he could not do it, for after all the ideas of such a brute as Buteau have more to do with his actions than have his physical processes.

There is more human kindness visible in the Spainards and it is doubtful if the difference exists in the people of the two nationalities. For example, tío Barret was compared to père Fouan (1) because of his attachment to the land. But in the extremity of need he tried to conceal his distress from his family in order that they might live happily and undisturbed. But père Fouan begrudged the children the meanest living -- and they repaid him in kind. Tía Mariposa (La horda) knew nothing better than the menial business of collecting the refuse of others. If want and degradation can extinguish the little spark of humanity, she should have been a veritable "bête humaine". But even she was capable of sacrificing her

(1) See p. 21.

dearest treasure of paste gems and tawdry jewels for the sake of her great-grandson. It is not that Blasco is more idealistic than Zola. His materialism leads events to a conclusion as unhappy and pessimistic as that of the darkest of the Rougon Macquart stories. But in spite of these things, his characters remain essentially human beings.

Blasco, as well as Zola, selects typical representatives of the milieu to be portrayed, for he, too, shows the close relation existing between the individual and his social and physical environment. La barraca is an illustration of the force which society may exercise by public sentiment; Cañas y barro shows the effect of the natural conditions of a locality upon its inhabitants:

"No, no eran gran cosa aquellas vírgenes del lago, con sus ropas lavadas en el agua pútrida de los canales, oliendo a barro y las manos impregnadas de una viscosidad que parecía penetrar hasta los huesos. El pelo descolorido por el sol, blanquecino y pobre, apenas se sombreaba sus caras enjutas y rojizas, en las que los ojos brillaban con el fuego de una fiebre siempre renovada al beber las aguas del lago. Su perfil anguloso, la sutilidad escurridiza de su cuerpo y el hedor de los zagalejos, las daba cierta semejanza con las anguilas, como si una nutrición monotonía e igual de muchas generaciones hubiera acabado por fijar en aquella gente los rasgos del animal que les servía de sustento." (1)

(1) Cañas y barro, pp. 35-36.

But since Blasco fixes the attention upon fewer characters the impression of each one is more distinct even if the character does not possess a marked individuality. Urquiola, the Jesuit (El Intruso), Salvatierra, the social prophet (La bodega), Don Eugenio, the pioneer merchant (Arroz y tartana) --- these are purely types, but they do not become submerged in a mass of others. Occasionally a personage is a type in that he is introduced to represent a class, but has at the same time, a distinctive individuality. Among these is Tonet's grandfather, el tío Paloma (Cañas y barro), who stands as a symbol of the past which knew subjection to no laws but those of nature.

A comparison of all of Zola's characters with all of Blasco's, makes evident that the latter gives to a far greater proportion a distinguishing individuality. One reason for this is the smaller number of personages presented --- more importance must be given to each. Another results from the fact that Zola consistently sacrifices the individual for the sake of the aggregate effect. In each of the four books under consideration the objective is the representation of some social group -- the slums, the mines, the province, the army --- and to these collective protagonists the individual is uniformly subordinated. This is not true with Blasco. In some, such as La barraca and Cañas y barro the group forms a background for the development and interplay of the lead-

ing characters. On the contrary, the central theme of La bodega is made up of abstract problems of economic oppression, alcoholism and subjection to the church, to which the element of plot and characters is secondary. This causes great inequality in Blasco's character portrayal. While some may be very dull and colorless, others make a lasting impression by their outstanding personalities which overbalance the effect of the former.

In his manner of handling character, Blasco is fond of contrast. Beside the drifting Tonet, Toni seems the more plodding and industrious. The rigid economies of Don Juan makes the reckless extravagance of his sister Doña Manuela stand out in bold relief. Zola varied his characters by small degrees of superiority or inferiority. The distance between the extremes is sufficiently marked, but they are not placed in counterposition.

The likenesses and differences in types of character depicted can be explained by the temperaments and conceptions of the authors. A common belief in determinism infuses into the lives of the protagonists of each a spirit of inevitability. Isidro Maltrana (La horda) could well be a character of L'Assommoir, were it not for the sporadic outburst of hope at the end, because his failure, like that of Hervaise results from inherent moral weaknesses. But the prototype of tío Paloma is not to be found in Zola. It is

Blasco's distinction to have portrayed such rugged strength. He loves the primitive life, free from the restraints of society and in his books are to be found such men as the poacher, "el Mosco" (La horda), and the ex-smuggler, Rafael (La bodega). Of this type of manhood Zola could not even conceive. Whereas the latter concentrated his energies upon his literary theories, Blasco learned to know the out-of-door life from personal experience.

Another difference is the ever-present grossness in Zola from which even the vagabonds of Blasco are comparatively free. Pimentó (La barraca) is a drunkard and an idler. He is a bully with his physical strength, but Blasco makes no mention of baseness or vulgarity. Occasionally one finds a disgusting episode like that of Cañamel's desire for Neleta during his last illness, but it is exceptional.

The women characters of the two are more similar. Neither Zola nor Blasco esteems womanhood highly. The position of a woman is always that of an inferior --- to be loved or to cast aside according to some man's whim. Sometimes she gets control as does Neleta, but in this rôle she is even less attractive than when oppressed. There are some beautiful examples of devotion as Feli (La horda), and Henriette (La Débauche) but none of enlightened intelligence.

Blasco does not depict humorous characters. The nearest

approach is such a strange combination of philosophy and vagabondage as Sangonera (Cañas y barro). But even he has a serious aspect. At times Blasco introduces a character who is purely episodic, having no relation to the plot and whom we see but once or twice in the book, such as Andresito in Arroz y tartana. Moreover he often brings in a person through whose instrumentality he may express his own ideas, but whose importance to the story is nothing. This is especially true in the propaganda novels. For example, Dr. Aresti is the character whom we see most often in El Intruso. There is, however, no development of his character nor change in his position during the whole book. He is merely the disciple of Blasco's own theory of progress and action and who argues the case against the Jesuits.

There are, therefore, many difference in the characterization of the two men. Of these the most constant and outstanding is that Zola's protagonist is ever the "bête humaine" --- Blasco's a human being regardless of the degree of degradation.

Chapter V

A charge which is commonly brought against the naturalists -- and against Zola, above all -- is that their novels are immoral on account of the unconventional topics which are freely treated. Emilia Pardo Bazán devotes a chapter of La cuestión palpitante to the discussion of this point and there makes a necessary distinction which the majority of readers are prone to overlook. (1) The morality of a book does not consist in presenting virtue rewarded and evil punished -- such a standard is artificial and false. The essentially immoral is only that which incites to vice, while that which offends us by lack of delicacy or non-conformity to social usages may be gross or revolting but not inconsistent with real morality. Books which are anti-social or anti-religious may be far more injurious in their effect than the most licentious pages of *Germinal* because they induce the public to accept false ideals which are later converted into action. The true immorality of the naturalists is not the obvious excess of crude details:

"La inmoralidad que entraña el naturalismo procede de su carácter fatalista, o sea del fondo de determinismo que contiene." (2)

(1) Emilia Pardo Bazán, La cuestión palpitante, Chap. XVI.

(2) Id., p. 232.

The analysis is well made. The philosophy of fatalism is dangerously attractive to men and women especially when they seem to be nearing failure. It is too easy to blame mis-haps upon "luck" or "fate" and sink into a stagnant state of pessimism. The continual portrayal of men who fight but lose through no fault of their own is one more consideration to lead an unhappy man to a state of inactivity.

Neither Zola nor Blasco may be freed from the charge of immorality when so interpreted. The characters of L'Assommoir are the playthings of their own weaknesses. Why would it not have been possible for Gervaise to continue to do her work well, when she was on the way to success? Only because of a moral nature for which she was not responsible and some events equally inevitable! Still more arbitrary is the fate which leads Jean through the maze of Paris streets to come upon his only friend, Maurice, and unknowingly stab him. There is a feeling of the emptiness of life when man is bereft of all superiority over nature and left to cynical and supine endurance.

This test of immorality is, therefore, whether the book spurs the reader on to further effort or leads him to a pessimistic resignation. In Blasco tragedy comes often from existing social conditions which the individual alone is powerless to change but which will yield to the attempts of the mass. Sánchez Morueta (El Intruso) is weakened by the influence of

Jesuitism; the laborers of La bodega live in a debased condition because of economic oppression which might be improved. Doña Manuela (Arroz y tartana) suffers very justly the consequences of her own false ideals which accord with the shallowness of the society in which she lived. The despotic force of heredity and the innate baseness of human beings which work the tragedies of Zola are far more hopeless than the evils of society which cause individual ruin but may be ameliorated by general effort. It is to this effort that Blasco wished to stir the people. His regard for personal happiness is negligible, and for that reason, his books assume a fatalistic aspect. There is much insistence upon a need of exertion, which is deeply moral.

Not all of the tragedies may be so easily reconciled as that of Sánchez Morueta or even of Isidro Maltrana. Batiste stands as a dark figure whom destiny pursues, regardless of his determination to succeed. Toni is another whom it seems that life might have repaid more fully for such unbounded expenditure of strength. Thus, the fatalistic element in Blasco's books is more varying than in Zola's. And they are consistently more hopeful only in Blasco's higher conception of human life. When the conquering forces have a recognizable cause, they may be opposed and ultimately overcome. But when they are within the man himself, there is no power which can change them; then is resignation the only open course.

This aspect of morality shows some difference, if not a great one, between Zola and Blasco; But in respect to the common interpretation of immorality -- grossness -- the diversity is marked. Zola, in his own life, was scrupulously chaste, and it was rather in a spirit of scientific investigation that he spread before the reader an array of pornographic details which purported to be entirely true to nature. A serious student of literature would receive them in the same way, even though he condemn the lack of good taste and artistic sense. But unfortunately, a very small percent of readers may be so classified, and the unusual sale of such books as L'Assommoir and Nana can be due to nothing more than the licentious scenes and language which satisfy a popular craving for the sensational.

The defense of the transgression of the rules of art is weakened, moreover, because his representations are inaccurate. Zola had an inverse imagination which was capable of embellishing situations, already deplorable, with vivid touches to make them worse. It is a strange circumstance that he who wished to be the most veritable of naturalists should have been strongly imbued with romanticism. The way in which he could adapt all things to his individual conception is characteristic of the romanticist. From an observation of nature he drew a multitude of details which give the impression of reality, but he interpreted them in his own way. His liking for sym-

bolism was, also, foreign to austere naturalism, for to see such a definite relationship between as prosaic an object as a pump engine and a group of society required a well developed imagination. (1) It is with almost melodic recurrence that symbolic ideas appear throughout Zola's books; for example, the copper alambic in L'Assommoir. In minor matters, also, Zola was ever ready to see beyond the commonplaceness of actual details the abstract and imaginary significance. Nor does the inspiration need to come from the fine or beautiful -- the most unpleasant of scenes may be suggestive. The following quotation is the vision of Maître Hourdequin when he and Jean were discussing the fertilization of the land:

"----Quand on pense que la vidange seule de Paris pourrait fertiliser trente mille hectares! Le calcul a été fait. D'un geste large, il avait embrassé l'étendue, l'immense Beauce plate. Et lui, dans sa passion, voyait Paris, Paris, lâcher la bonde de ses fosses, le fleuve fertilisateur de l'engrais humain. C'était la grande ville qui rendait aux champs la vie qu'elle en avait reçue. Lentement, le sol buvait cette fécondité, et de la terre gorgée, engraisée, le pain blanc poussait, débordait, en moissons géantes." (2)

Such instances of which there are many, show the presence of an active imagination always ready to symbolize and to unify disconnected facts into a harmonious whole.

(1) See p. 66.

(2) La Terre, p. 404.

Zola's treatment of nature exemplifies the same trait. Nature is never portrayed for its own beauty, but rather for adding color to the subjective atmosphere. When the picture is one of sadness and desolation caused by human pettiness, the landscape assumes as dismal an aspect. Immediately before the division of property among the greedy children of père Fouan, the natural setting is as follows:

"Le jour avait grandi, un vent glacé poussait dans le ciepâle des vols continus de gros images; et la Beauce flagellée, s'étendait d'une tristesse morne." (1)

And this is the condition when Lise and Françoise discover their father dead in his carriage:

"La nuit tombait, un grand nuage fauve qui jaunissait le ciel, éclairait le mourant d'un reflet d'incendie." (2)

In L'Assommoir the little stream that flows in the gutter from the paint shop is a brilliant blue on days of good fortune, but when despair comes it is a mournful black. Examples could be indefinitely multiplied, for such is Zola's habitual use of nature setting. This is but another illustration of his tendency to synthesize discordant elements. It is on account of this that Zola's books have a unique power and not because of the fidelity to truth. He was morally sincere in the diagnosis of social ills and felt that his

(1) La Terre, p. 35.

(2) Id., p. 103.

pseudo-scientific exposition would alleviate conditions; but dirtiness and obscenity are unfit for artistic purposes. The naturalists did a service to literature by showing the beauty which exists in the trivialities of every day. But Zola overloaded his colors, exaggerating the evils and giving as a result the ideally base.

One may accuse Blasco Ibáñez of being plain spoken or indelicate in his novels but rarely of being gross or vulgar. Certain books contain passages which are in their sensual suggestiveness worse, perhaps, than Zola's open display of all which society ordinarily reserves for individual privacy. But he does not insist upon tainting every scene with coarseness nor thrust upon the reader continual violations of social usage. If judged by a very puritanical standard, certain of his works might be called immoral in the popular interpretation of the word. But a catholic taste and a just appreciation of virility would not so mark them. They are rugged and the colors are strong but indecency does not clog the vivid portrayal of life.

Blasco is more frankly impressionistic than Zola. The latter refers so scrupulously to the human document that the traces of imagination are incongruous. But Blasco freely supplements actual details with romantic and imaginative touches ---- e.g. the idea of the "horde" threatening the civilization of Madrid, which is clearly impossible. It is moreover, by artistic fancy that he interprets the personalities of the

Albufera and the huerta. (1) They are comparable to Zola's symbolization of the distillery of the pump engine. For a locality may influence its inhabitants; it may have a distinct character, but it requires an artist to grasp the relationship and sense its individuality. Sometimes, furthermore, Blasco gives free rein to his imagination as in Arroz y tartana where, to Andresito, the landscape seems a great symphony of colors:

"Allí estaba la sinfonía, una verdadera pieza clasica con su tema fundamental -- y él percibía con los ojos el misterioso canto, como si la mirada y el oído hubiesen trocado sus maravillosas funciones.

"Primero, las notas aisladas e incoherentes de la introducción eran manchas verdes de los cercanos jardincillos; las rojas aglomeraciones de tejado, las blancas paredes, todas las pinceladas de color sueltas y sin armonizar por hallarse próximas. Y tras esta fugaz introducción, comenzaba la sinfonía, brillante, atronadora." etc. (2)

This passage is typical of Blasco's habitual treatment of nature --- not that he always perceives it in this way, but that he loves it, sees its finer shading as well as the splendor of the whole. The ever shifting beauty of natural phenomena form a constant background, now riotous with flowers and perfume, now sinister and foreboding, but always with a

(1) See La barraca and Cañas y barro.

(2) Arroz y tartana, p. 85.

touch which shows the sincerity of Blasco's appreciation. He devoted many pages to nature description whereas Zola inserts lines here and there merely to give atmosphere. Rarely does one find as vivid a picture as the transition from night to day in the opening pages of La barraca ---- the increasing intensity of light, the stirring and gradual awakening of animal life, the squeaking of doors and the beginning of a day's work --- all is artistically blended. The following description is but one of many examples which illustrate the richness of Blasco's imagery and the acuteness of his sensory impression:

"La Dehesa estaba florida y perfumada como un jardín. Los matorrales, bajo la caricia de un sol que parecía de verano, se cubrían de flores, y por encima de ellos brillaban los insectos como botones de oro, aleteando con sordo zumbido. Los pinos retorcidos y seculares se movían con majestuoso rumor, y bajo las bóvedas que formaban sus copas extendíase una dulce penumbra semejante a la de las naves de una catedral inmensa. De vez en cuando, al través de los troncos se filtraba un rayo de sol como si entrase por un ventanal." (1)

Noble sentiments find meager expression in the books of Zola. Since his men are grossly animalistic, it would be impossible for them to harbor spiritual and idealistic qualities. Love is deprived of the tenderness and exquisite

(1) Cañas y barro, p. 62.

pleasure which are hers traditionally, and becomes purely carnal. Marriage is often nothing more than the legalization of relations otherwise illicit. Conjugal happiness at best, seems to mean a satisfactory business arrangement and fidelity to one another. But the transcendental spark which ----- be it illusion or not ----- men from time immemorial have attributed to this vital force is denied existence. Parental love is at least deadened, if not entirely crushed by greed and economic oppression. For although there is the Fouan family which exemplifies utter selfishness, there is also Maheu who did his best to provide for his brood. In general, however, the amount of sentimentality of any kind is practically negligible.

La Débâcle, which is the next to the last novel in the Rougon-Macquart series, is an exception to this last statement. Zola seems to have become more lenient in his attitude toward people, for here his characters are sometimes animated by the higher human emotions. Henriette is entirely free from the usual trace of bestiality; Honoré treasures a love for Silvine through years of absence from her, even when he knows that she was not faithful to him. Still more unusual is the depth and sincerity of feeling existing between Jean and Maurice, which is so well expressed at their parting:

"Et ils se baisèrent, et comme dans le bois, la veille, il y avait au fond de ce baiser, la fraternité de dangers

courus ensemble ces quelques semaines d'héroïque vie commune qui les avaient unis, plus étroitement que des années d'ordinaire amitié n'auraient pu le faire. Les jours sans pain, les nuits sans sommeil, les fatigues excessives, la mort toujours présente, passaient dans leur attendrissement.

Est-ce que jamais deux coeurs peuvent se reprendre, que le don de soi-même les a de la sorte fondus l'un dans l'autre? Mais le baiser, échangé sous les ténèbres des arbres, était plein de l'espoir nouveau que la fuite leur ouvrait; tandis que ce baiser, à cette heure, restait frissonnant des angoisses de l'adieu. Se reverrait-on un jour? et comment, dans quelles circonstances de douleur ou de joie?" (1)

Such a passage is a glimpse of what Zola might have written, had he freed himself from the naturalistic and scientific mania. But it is an anomaly in his works as they are.

In the novels of Blasco Ibáñez, love and sentiment find a more usual expression than in those of Zola. There is the love of Juanito and Tónica (Arroz y tartana) which even though it be somewhat subdued, is typically romantic. Blasco understands and interprets the phenomena of such love experiences;

"El amor había transformado a Juanito. Su alma vestía también nuevos trajes, y desde que era novio de Tónica, parecía como que despertaban sus sentidos por primera vez y adquiriría otros completamente nuevos. Hasta entonces había

(1) La Débâcle, p. 488.

carecido de olfato. Estaba segurísimo de ello; y si no, cómo era que todas las primaveras las había pasado sin percibir siquiera aquel perfume de azahar que exhalaban los paseos y ahora le enloquecía, enardeciendo su sangre y arrojando su pensamiento en la vaguedad de un oleaje de perfumes? No era menos cierto que hasta entonces había estado sordo. Ya no escuchaba el piano de sus hermanas como quien oye llover; ahora la música le arañaba en lo más hondo del pecho, y algunas veces hasta le saltaban las lágrimas cuando Amparito se arrancaba con alguna romanza italiana de esas que meten el corazón en un puño." (1)

Another illustration is the blind exhilaration of Isidro and Feli in their first days together. Blasco remains a realist, however, for he does not permit his characters in the ecstatic bliss of such affairs to be isolated from the sordidness of the world, which soon creeps in to spoil the happiest dream. His usual representation is that these love experiences are necessary episodes in a man's life, while in a woman's, they comprise everything. It is a typically masculine point of view and one to be expected from a man of Blasco's temperament.

A different love is that of Tonet and Neleta by which she holds him a helpless possession. Still different is the hidden passion which "La Borda" cherished for the same egoistic Tonet, and which is revealed only when she bends above his dead body. But all of these are more or less common-

(1) Arroz y tartana, pp. 211-212.

place in their physical and emotional manifestations. It is in La bodega that Blasco makes an unusual departure from his own custom, and from Spanish tradition as a whole, which upheld so rigorously the "pundonor". María de la Luz is violated by Luis Dupont in a drunken revel. This places, of course, an apparently insurpassable barrier between her and her lover Rafael; but their love continues in spite of separation. Then Salvatierra gives to Rafael a new vision --- that the virginity of the body is secondary to that of the soul. The deep sincerity of their mutual love should rise above an accident of circumstances and find fulfillment in union.

"Las verguenzas del cuerpo representan muy poco El amor es lo que importa; lo demás son preocupaciones de animales. Tu corazoncito es mío? pues ya lo tengo todo María de la Lú! Compañerita del arma! Vamos a marchar de cara al sol; ahora nacemos de veras; hoy empieza nuestro amor....." (1)

"Y los dos jovenes se abrazaron en la entrada de la casucha, juntando sus bocas sin estremecimientos de pasión carnal, manteniéndose largo rato unidos, como si despreciasen a las gentes que los miraban escandalizadas, como si con su amor desafiasen lo aspavientos de un mundo viejo que iban a abandonar."

Such a view transcends the highest of Zola's conceptions.

(1) La bodega, p. 365.

Conclusion

The dissimilarities which have consistently appeared in every line of comparison must, in themselves, refute the charge of imitation. It would be a poor copy which should approach the original no more closely than have Blasco's works those of Zola. But the presence of Zola's influence has never been denied. What, then, are the features of Blasco's production which manifest the presence of an influence, recognizably that of Zola and distinct from the general naturalistic movement?

Zola consistently concentrated interest, not upon problems of individuals, but upon a collective subject -- some unit of society. In contrast to the power of this group, combined with the blind force of heredity, the human being seems but the victim of circumstances. His psychology is simplified to an almost rudimentary state. But the sacrifice of individuality makes more graphic the swarming life of the whole. His means of presentation is description which, in addition to being scrupulously minute, defies all laws of art or convention in the pitiless disclosure of every human function.

The fore-going résumé is a condensation of all the idiosyncracies of Zola's works which find reflection in the novels of Blasco Ibáñez. He tends to follow Zola in

placing emphasis upon the social organization. In both the same social forces -- tradition, prejudice, capitalistic oppression, etc. --- are effective agents, controlling human destiny. The scenes, indeed, which Blasco chooses from Spanish life sometimes exactly correspond to those from French life which Zola portrays. The subordination of plot to the description of the milieu may be a manifestation of Zola's influence. Certainly this is directly evident in the occasional presence of unpleasant details scattered through Blasco's books.

Having received suggestions, however, Blasco did not give them forth in the same form. Rather did he assimilate them, then express them modified by his own personality, augmented by his individual concepts and experiences and made thoroughly Spanish. This is true even of his first books in which the trace of Zola can be most easily detected. The atmosphere of Arroz y tartana is truly Valencian.

Zola's method of organization was balanced and compact; his characters, many in number, generally typical and rather colorless; his descriptions extremely minute and often offensive. Blasco on the contrary, constructed his novels loosely, even disproportionately; he represented few characters vividly; his manner of description was impressionis-

tic and rarely coarse. Furthermore, the interpretation of human psychology, the type of characters selected and certain aesthetic touches could belong to no one but Blasco. Later development shows continually increasing divergence.

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Index

Accuracy of naturalism

- in Blasco's novels, 55
- in Zola's novels, 51-52

Alcoholism

- in L'Assommoir, 33-35
- in La bodega, 28-31, 35

Arroz y tartana

- Basic problem of, 43
- Comparison with La Terre, 57
- Descriptions of Valencian life, 53
- Love element, 94
- Publication of, 6

L'Assommoir

- Comparison with La bodega, 35
- Comparison with La horda, 38-39
- Realistic effect of, 60-61
- Résumé of, 31-32
- Treatment of nature in, 89

Balzac, Honoré, 1

La barraca

- Comparison with La Terre, 21-25
- Personality of the huerta, 62
- Résumé, 19-21

Bernard, Claude, 1, 2, 47

Blasco Ibáñez, Vicente

- Biographical sketch, 9
- Method of work, 14
- Novelistic production, 14-15
- Philosophy, 10
 - Reflected in character, 76, 81
- Religion, 11
 - Expressed by Dr. Aresti, 44
- Romanticism in, 90-91
- The "Spanish Zola", 6

La bodega

- Comparison with L'Assommoir, 35-36
- Love element, 96
- Résumé of, 28-31
- Social thesis, 41

Cañas y barro

- Description of women of the Albufera, 79
- Personality of the Albufera, 62
- Plot of, 67-68
- Love element, 97

La catedral, 11

Character

Blasco's treatment of

Types, 76-77

Woman characters, 77

* Comparison of Blasco's and Zola's characters, 81-83

Zola's treatment of

Types, 71-73

Range of characters, 74

Woman characters, 77

La Comédie Humaine, 1, 2

Construction of novels

Blasco's construction, 66-68

Comparison of the two, 69-70

Zola's construction, 63-66

Les Contes à Ninon, 2

La cuestión palpitante, 6, 84

Daudet, Alphonse, 5, 12

La Débâcle

Picture of peasantry in, 27

Love and sentimentality, 93

Le Docteur Pascal, 15

Documentation

Blasco, 55

Zola, 50-51

Entre naranjos, 15, 58

Fatalism

in Blasco's novels, 85-86

in Zola's novels, 85

Interpreted as immorality, 84-85

La Faute de l'abbé Mouret, 51

Fernán Caballero, 5

Flaubert, Gustave, 1, 5, 46, 50

Flor de mayo, 25

Germinal

Comparison with La horda, 39-40

Comparison with El Intruso, 42

Construction of, 63

Realistic effect of, 61

Résumé of, 41-42

Social aspect of, 40

Grossness

Comparison of Blasco with Zola, 56, 87, 90

in La Terre, 26-27

of details depicted in Zola's novels, 47

of Zola's characters, 82

of Zola's language, 49

Les Goncourt, 1

L'Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise, 1

La horda

Comparison with L'Assommoir, 38, 39

Comparison with Germinal, 39

Love element, 95

Plot, 37

Social thesis of, 36

Humor

Blasco, 82

Zola, 73

"Illusion of reality"

Blasco, 61

Zola, 66

Immorality

Element of in Blasco's works, 85-86

in Zola's works, 84-85

Interpretation of Pardo Bazán, 84

El Intruso

Comparison with Germinal, 42

Description of steel mills, 54

Social thesis, 41, 44

Love

Blasco's interpretation in

Arroz y tartana, 94

La bodega, 96

Canas y barro, 95

La horda, 95

Zola's usual interpretation, 92-93

La Débâcle, 93-94

La Maja Desnuda, 15

Mare Nostrum, 58

Maupassant, Guy de, 46

Method of writing

Blasco's, 13

Zola's, 12

Nana, 5

Naturalism

Development in Spain, 5-6

Forces contributing to development in France, 1

Prevailing type of problems of, 16

Naturalistic method of
Blasco Ibáñez, 52-56
Comparison of Blasco with Zola
Flaubert, 46, 50
Guy de Maupassant, 46
Zola, 47-51
Nature, Treatment of
Blasco, 91-92
Zola, 89

Une page d'amour, 15
Pardo Bazán, Emilia, 6, 84
Peasantry, depicted in
 La barraca, 19-22, 26-27
 La bodega, 28
 La Débâcle, 27
 La Terre, 16-19, 22, 26-27
Pereda, J.M. de, 5
Pérez Galdós, B., 5
Pierre et Jean, 46
Plot in the novels of
 Blasco, 68
 Zola, 65
Propaganda
 Blasco's use of, 44
 Zola's use of, 45
Psychology in
 Blasco's characters, 78
 Zola's characters, 75
El Pueblo, 9

Les Quatre Evangiles, 5

Rénan, E., 1
Romanticism
 in Blasco, 90-91
 in Zola, 87-88
Les Rougon-Macquart
 Conception of, 2
 Purpose of, 3-4

Sand, George, 1
Sensualism of Blasco and Zola compared, 58
Social problems in
 Arroz y tartana, 43-44
 La bodega, 41
 La horda, 36
 El Intruso, 41
 Germinal, 39, 40

Sónnica la cortesana, 15

Symbolism

in L'Assommoir, 43, 66

in Germinal, 66

Zola's use of, 67, 88

Taine, H, 1

La Terre

Comparison with Arroz y tartana, 57

Comparison with La barraca, 21-25

Economic problem of, 45

Grossness of, 26-27

Résumé of, 16-19

Les Villes, 5

Zola, Emile

Biographical sketch, 8

Literary influences, 1, 2

Method of work, 12

Morality, 87

Novelistic production, 15

Philosophy, 11-12

Reflected in characters, 75, 81

Theory of the novel, 2-3
